
another object to distract herself, which subdued her anger. This was very good of her to do in the moment because usually our pattern of anger is so habituated that when it arises we immediately think about the faults of the object and that causes us to become even more angry. This is because the more we focus on the faults of the object, the more our anger escalates—our focus ensures we always find additional reasons to get angry. However, if we do not focus on the object or think of its faults and instead recognise the disadvantages and faults of anger itself, the anger in our minds will subside.

This method of thinking about the disadvantages and faults of a negative state of mind when it arises is very useful because it naturally appeases and reduces the negative mindset so that it does not intensify. The moment we look at the negative state of mind, question its value and analyse how it arises, we can recognise its faults so that it does not dominate us and is appeased instead. This method has great value and can be used to counteract all negative states of mind.

Of course we must be careful to distinguish negative state of minds, like anger, as faulty rather than the object we are getting angry at or ourselves. The faults are not with the individual we become angry with or ourselves, but the anger that is affecting the state of our minds. Anger is the troublemaker that we need to overcome so that it does not dominate us and disturb our minds. This sort of analysis relieves us from obsessions or justifications to feel negative states of mind because it creates a distance between ourselves and the negative mind.

When we find a reason to get angry with, for example, another person, we might react with anger and go so far as to confront the other person, which could lead to a physical fight. If a confrontation or fight occurred and the other person reacted back we could get emotionally or physically hurt. The factor that originally compelled us to act in a way that caused another person and ourselves harm was the state of mind of anger. Anger was the cause for the negative situation. However, we do not usually make this distinction and instead allow ourselves to angrily react. If we thought about it though, we would see that anger is what is causing us to react and it will only end up hurting everyone involved. So rather than being a slave to anger and reacting to it by criticising or hurting the object we see as being at fault, we will be harmed. If we took a step back and looked at the anger and saw it as being a fault, we would be wary about continuing in that state of mind because of the consequences.

The state of mind of anger, just like other negative states of mind, is said to be a faulty mind in Buddhist teachings. The reason why it is considered to be a faulty state of mind is because it distorts our perception so that we do not see things as they are. In the case of anger, our perception is distorted to the point where the object of our anger appears to be completely at fault and has no appealing features or characteristics. However, if the object really was at fault and had no redeeming qualities then everyone who interacts with that object would see it in this way, but as we know, that is not true. Similarly, when our anger subsides, we can see the qualities of the

object again. If we understand how anger distorts our perception, we can understand that it is a faulty state of mind, which cannot be trusted when it arises. This is also true for other negative states of mind.

The techniques I have mentioned are not obscure or unreasonable ways of thinking. Really they are simple methods to understand the absurdities of negative mindsets. Contemplating these points can help us to achieve positive ways of thinking and to recognise the faults of negative states of mind. They also ensure that our choices and judgements in life have a sound basis. As this is the case, the value of these techniques should not be underestimated.

We can now meditate since I have described some of the benefits and the technique.

To do this we choose an appropriate object and familiarise ourselves with it so that we have a vivid mental image to focus on. For this meditation session we can use the regular rhythm of our own breath. So, for the next few minutes, we can focus our minds on the mental image of our breath coming in and going out.

[Pause for single-pointed meditation.]

If you adopt the meditation technique in your everyday life, just as we attempted in our session then, the familiarity of your practice will slowly reap you positive results. The younger generation may particularly want to take an interest now and make the practice a regular part of their life so that it serves a great purpose when they are older.

Meditation requires consistency and persistence for it to bring a genuine sense of wellbeing and happiness. The great result that a regular practice provides is a sense of satisfaction and contentment in the heart. I consider this to be the greatest purpose and achievement in life. After all, the sense of wellbeing and happiness you have in your mind goes wherever you go. You cannot leave your mind somewhere and travel without it because your mind accompanies you wherever you are. If your mind is calm, peaceful and happy, you will experience the positive effect at all times. Therefore, cultivating a genuinely calm and happy mind through meditation is the way to make your life most meaningful. I emphasise this again and again because the kindest and greatest gift you can give yourself is a happy state of mind.

A person who is joyful and has a calm mind is someone everyone appreciates and wants to be with. Such a person would always be a welcomed guest because he or she brings happiness to others, whether in a relationship, family or wider community. If that person were to be missing from a gathering, others would feel that they are missing an essential part of their get-together because the person is highly valued. So a joyful and calm person is someone who is wanted and needed in all circumstances.

You can become that person because having a joyful and calm mind is within your reach. You definitely have the capacity to develop a genuine sense of personal wellbeing and happiness. When this is established through the technique of a consistent meditation practice, you will bring happiness to others wherever you go. This is regardless of whether you consider yourself to be a

spiritual person or whether you follow a particular religion; giving yourself a happy and peaceful mind, and bringing other people happiness does not require you to be affiliated to a spiritual or religious organisation. I consider those that bring a genuine sense of ease and joy to others to be virtuous. To make others happy through your natural good qualities and not through devious or destructive ways is definitely a virtue. We all have the ability to establish our physical and mental happiness. We can consider taking care of ourselves physically and taking care of ourselves mentally to be our main priority and responsibility in our lives. The ultimate assets we have currently are our bodies and minds, so ensuring and securing their wellbeing is very worthwhile.

With the limited time we have left we can have some questions, but I implore you to ask good ones! [*Geshe-la chuckles.*] I feel like what I have related to you has been meaningful and worthwhile so to ask for a good question is not requesting too much ... but perhaps you are too afraid to ask a question in case it is not good! [*Everyone laughs.*]

Question: I am thinking about baptising my son. My reason for wanting him to be baptised is so he can go to the Catholic school down the road from us. It is a good school and I think the structure would lead him in the right direction, but I don't know if I am getting my son baptised for the right reasons. What do you think?

Geshe-la: A mother naturally wants her child to have the best education possible, so wherever that may be, it is befitting for the child to go. How you are thinking is natural and correct for a mother who has this responsibility. You want your son to have a good education and to attend a school that provides a sound direction for his life. Your son can achieve this by going to the school and he can choose whatever course of life he wants later on. Your personal interest in Buddhism does not stop you from having your child being baptised, and that is a good example for others.

I deeply respect and admire the Christian faith. The value of the Christian faith can be seen in those who practise it. I have had many personal encounters with Christian practitioners and I have found them to be genuine and good-hearted. There is definitely great value in sending your son to a Christian school. You could, of course, check with your son what his own personal interest is and see what he would like to do.

Those who follow the Christian faith to its fullest extent have a strong faith and belief in God and this provides them with the initiative to be kind, considerate and compassionate to fellow human beings. There are many great Christian acts of love and compassion that have been completed by practitioners because of their strong faith in God. His Holiness the Dalai Lama often praises the care that Christian brothers and sisters give to the needy and impoverished. He says the extent is really remarkable and noteworthy. In fact, some monks in our Tibetan Buddhist tradition have been sent to live in Christian monasteries so they can learn. Maybe some have become Christians. I don't know. [*Laughter.*] There is one lama who has become Christian.

I follow His Holiness' teachings. His Holiness says that all religions are uniquely beneficial to others. This means that every religion contributes to the wellbeing of others and so are worthy of respect and admiration. I truly believe this myself. A religious leader of another faith once said to me that I have an incredible good and remarkable spiritual leader. He said he has found that only His Holiness speaks in favour of and respects all religions. He said I was very lucky to have a spiritual leader like that. A Christian priest then told me that genuine respect and harmony between different religions would contribute to world peace and the wellbeing of so many. He said it is really, really crucial for harmony between religions.

That was a good question. I hope my answer has served you.

I regularly mention to those I have a connection with that looking after the needs of your children is important. I mention the necessity of not being too narrow-minded by thinking that children have to follow their parents' beliefs or ways, but rather to think about what is the beneficial for the each child in the long run. Sometimes parents tell me that they wish their child had different interests, but they allow and support their children in their interests anyway. I think that is noble and the best way to bring up children.

So, before we end the session for the evening let us again take a few minutes to engage in a meditation practice. This time the object that we can focus on will be the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is the name of Buddha Shakyamuni. As we hear the mantra being chanted we can try to keep our full attention and focus on the sound and when the recitation subsides, we can try to concentrate on the nice sensation we feel for a few moments. That will suffice as our meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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