
between positive states of mind, which contribute to our wellbeing, and negative states of mind, which are destructive and which disturb our mind. That deep insight is specifically referred to as analytical wisdom, because it enables us to distinguish between what is useful and what is destructive to oneself. Then we can develop the positive states of mind and begin to eliminate the negative states of mind.

The next time we feel disturbed, rather than immediately pointing the finger outwards and trying to find fault and blame externally, we can take the initiative to look within and ask: "Okay, what state of mind could be contributing to this disturbance? What has caused my mind to become agitated, restless and disturbed? What could be causing that?" If one takes this approach sincerely and honestly, one will be able to detect something within the mind that makes one vulnerable to being disturbed. So the fault does not lie outside of us but within. One will gain this invaluable insight from the practice of meditation. At this point, when one is able to realise that the real enemy is not outside of us, we will have made real progress. Normally we blame those outside of us saying they are the ones causing all of our problems, this is why one is agitated and disturbed. Instead we should be able to detect the enemy within – the negative states of mind are the real cause of disturbance in one's mind.

So in the process of training the mind with meditation, the more we are able to work on our mind to subdue the inner causes of disturbance, the more external things will not be able harm us. This is contrary to how we normally evaluate a situation where one is agitated and disturbed. We are habituated normally to immediately looking outside and blaming something outside. We tend to ask: "What is causing me this disturbance? Who is at fault? Something external is causing it."

Because of this habituation, we never really stop to think that the real cause of disturbance is within us. When we adopt the training of looking within ourselves and recognising the causes of disturbance – the negative states of mind – this mere recognition already defuses the intensity of that particular negative state of mind. As we work further on our mind, we will find that the more we are able to subdue this negative mind, then even when there is an external situation that could agitate us, we will not be as vulnerable as we would have previously. That is the positive effect of having worked on one's mind.

It is not normally apparent to us that our mind could be in an agitated and disturbed state. However if, for example, one were to verbalise whatever thought arose in one's mind and started telling people exactly what was going on in one's mind all the time, I'm pretty sure people would start thinking you'd gone crazy! *[laughter]* If only positive, good thoughts were going on in your mind, then people would appreciate it. But if we are honest about what is going on in our mind most of the time, if we shared that with others, people might be shocked. The point here is that we are normally obsessed with many irrelevant and disturbing thoughts that are not really conducive to our wellbeing and that churn over and over in our head.

Some students have confided in me that when they started worrying about unnecessary, random things, at some point after these concerns and worries had started going round and round their mind, the mind became agitated. Because of this agitation in the mind, when they went into the outside world, everything appeared in a dark light. People didn't appear appealing or supportive or nice. These are individuals who have honestly shared their own experience with me – they are recognising that internal turmoil and agitation causes one's very perception to see things as being hostile to oneself. It all starts in the mind.

These are significant points that others have shared. It is up to each of us to see if this is true for oneself or not. When we do this internal investigation, we can really learn a lot about ourselves. There is so much to learn about what goes on in our mind. Through this internal investigation, we begin to recognise for ourselves that there are certain states of mind and patterns that we need to overcome and discard, as they are not useful to us. Then there are certain other states of mind that we may have failed to notice, that are actually positive, and that we need to further develop.

Thus it is through this internal investigation, which is part of our mental training, that one begins to recognise certain positive states of mind one needs to further acquaint oneself with, and which can become stronger and firmer. Then there are other states of mind that are destructive and not useful to one. Rather than familiarising the mind with these negative thoughts, one makes the decision to minimise, defuse it and ultimately discard such states of mind.

That sort of personal initiative enables one to make clear, sound decisions in one's life. Whatever activity we need to do – following the right direction in one's life and making life choices and so forth – we can make the right choices by having that clear, internal recognition of what is useful and meaningful versus what is detrimental to our wellbeing. That decision will then be made on the basis of a clear understanding, the analytical wisdom that comes from the inside. Therefore there is a great advantage to oneself in being able to direct one's life in a more meaningful direction.

This inborn wisdom helps to clear away one's doubt: it is doubt that hinders us from moving forward. The very nature of doubt is that it pulls us in two directions: "Should I be doing this or should I do that?" On one day you may think: "I am going to do that". Then the next day you think: "No actually that was not a good idea, maybe I should do that". Then one keeps going back and forth, and may end up not making any good decisions and choices or, even worse, making wrong choices. Because it is doubt that hinders our progress, when we find methods to develop our own clear wisdom and intelligence, this will naturally help one to clear away doubts and make the right decisions. We can then move forward and gain what it is that we need to achieve. I am sharing these points with you because I feel they will be useful throughout your life.

So having cleared away doubts, the decisions and choices one makes will be firm and stable – unlike the situation

we mentioned earlier where one keeps shifting back and forth between options. Our decisions will have been made from our own clear understanding. This is a significant point: you are the best person to know what is right for you, what decisions you must make. You are the ultimate authority because others don't really know your mind, unless they have a high level of clairvoyance. At best they can give you some good suggestions but they can't read your mind, so to rely on others to make decisions for us is neither practical nor suitable. No one other than oneself knows what is going on within one's mind, what one's aspirations are, and so forth. It is oneself that recognises the negative states of mind – others don't need to point them out to you if you have already taken the initiative to recognise them yourself. One needs to be able to recognise a positive state of mind, and understand that the decisions made from that positive intention will be sound, rather than needing to rely on others for input. The point here is that one needs to take the initiative to make the right decisions oneself.

If one were to rely on others for advice in making one's decisions, then ideally it would have to be someone who could read one's mind, and who, without you having said anything, would be able to know your doubts and questions and direct you in the right direction. But we find that is not really the case, is it? With most people we encounter, we have to tell them what is going on in our mind and what difficulties we have in our mind and so forth. Based on that, they may give some advice. But then it is questionable whether we are able to accurately relate everything that is going on in one's mind to another.

One lady in an earlier class mentioned that she works in counselling. She mentioned that, if we were able to know exactly what is going on in the client's mind, what their needs were and so forth, then we might be in a better position to help them. But they are not going to tell us exactly that they want or what exactly is in their mind. It is not customary in our tradition to relate all the secrets in one's mind.

If one has a secret one is not really capable of sharing with others, one has sole ownership of it. Especially if it is causing real distress or trouble for you, because you are not ready to share it with others, ultimately you have to deal with it yourself. Others are not able to know exactly what is going on within you, so what you are left is to work with it yourself. At this point, we can also understand the advice the Buddha has given when he said: "One is ultimately one's own protector and ultimately one's own enemy as well". This is a significant point that we need to understand. When one takes the initiative for one's own development and really works on oneself, one becomes one's best friend and protector. Whereas if one allows one's mind to be influenced by negativities, one becomes one's enemy. This is the main point.

With this advice in mind, I often remind myself and point the finger at myself saying: "Remember you are your own enemy or your own friend". When I point to myself like this, it is really helpful for me.

When one's mind is imbued with love and compassion, the mind naturally becomes very calm and relaxed.

Conversely, the moment anger arises it immediately disturbs an otherwise calm and peaceful state of mind. Therefore when one takes the initiative to embody love and compassion within one's heart and in one's mind, one is being one's best friend, because one is providing the means for a genuinely peaceful and happy state of mind. Whereas when one allows anger to overpower one's mind, one is allowing oneself to be one's enemy. In fact an enemy is defined as that which destroys one's peace and happiness and gives one suffering. Since that is how we define an enemy, if anger destroys our peace of mind and gives it distress then it has got to be one's enemy.

To clarify, there is a difference between that which *gives* one suffering and that which *causes* one suffering. The difference is that what *causes* us suffering is little more distant; in other words, the suffering will arise a little later. On the other hand, that which *gives* suffering relates to the immediate suffering one experiences. To use an analogy, the seed would be the immediate cause for the shoot – the shoot is the immediate result of the seed – whereas the fruit comes much later. So the seed is not the immediate cause of the fruit.

One will see the real purpose of what is to be achieved when one actually engages in the practice of meditation. Regularly thinking about these points and analysing one's own state of mind will help one to attain a significant goal. Having explained some of the benefits, now we can actually engage in formal meditation practice.

First we re-adopt our physical posture to be relaxed, sitting upright but comfortable. We need to also ensure we have a clear state of mind, so we need to withdraw our attention from all other distractions, temporarily leaving aside all other agendas and thoughts, and bringing our focus within. Having brought the focus within ourselves, we then actually place it upon the breath, which is the meditation object here. Just mentally observe the breath coming and going out naturally, and spending a few moments on that. [*Pause for meditation*]

Before we conclude for the evening, just maintain that awareness. This time we can shift our focus to the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. While that recitation is going on, keep your focus on the sound, and when the recitation stops, just focus on that residual pleasant sensation or feeling you get for a few moments and that will suffice for meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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