
states of mind, and intentionally acquainting and familiarising ourselves with positive states of mind. If we use a contemporary analogy, it is the same as how we relate to external companions and friends. When we notice that a companion is engaging in bad habits, and feel that we might be influenced in a negative way, we minimise our association with that person, and in fact may be stop our association with them altogether. Whereas we want to associate with those who help to promote joyful feelings, and sense of well-being.

That is exactly how it is with our states of mind. We definitely need to disassociate ourselves from the states that cause us distress, and we need to intentionally associate ourselves with positive states of mind. It is good to really work on understanding these points at a practical level. This might involve having an internal dialogue.

With a negative state of mind, say, 'I am not going to associate with you any more. I am not going to follow you'. We need to protest by saying 'You have been the master of my mind, and you have controlled it for too long. I have now recognised you as a troublemaker. I'm not going to allow you to have control over me any longer, and I am not going to associate with you'. That is how we need to deal with negative states of mind.

Whereas with positive states of mind, we say. 'I want to adopt positive states of mind, so I will follow you. I will allow you to influence my mind so that it becomes more peaceful, and more joyful. I really need to associate with you'. This is a really practical way of encouraging ourselves to engage in, and adopt this training. It may seem like a simple method, but it really works. I apply these kinds of practical methods to encourage myself to gain more from the trainings.

In summary, we make the decision and commitment not to follow negative states of mind, and to ensure that our mind becomes more familiar with positive states of mind, we adopt the meditation technique of intentionally focusing on a positive object. In a meditation practice we choose an appropriate positive or neutral object that does not cause the afflictions to arise, and apply our focus on that object for a certain length of time. The more we familiarise our minds with a positive object, i.e. an object that does not cause afflictions and distractions to arise, the more likely it is that we will be influenced by that positive state of mind.

It is natural that the mind is influenced and strengthened by what it is most familiar with, so the more we lessen our association and familiarity with negative states of mind, and the more we familiarise ourselves with a positive state of mind, the sooner a positive state of mind will prevail. We need to understand the significance of the practice in this way.

As mentioned previously, first of all we need to recognise negative states of mind. They are classified as negative states because they cause us distress and anguish. An example of a negative state of mind is anger. When anger arises, recognise it as such, and then, as mentioned previously, protest saying, 'I am not going to follow you. I am not going to allow you to dominate my mind, causing me distress, and anguish, and agitation'. These

are measures that I have employed myself. Of course at this time in my life, maybe because of my age, I can safely say that I am hardly influenced by anger. Of course, it seems quite natural that at a younger age anger is much more prevalent, so I don't blame those who have difficulty with anger.

To further emphasise this point, in the early part of one's life, negative states of mind such as anger and attachment are quite prevalent and quite strong. So we could say that being influenced by these negative states of mind is quite natural, and then engage in actions and activities that are harmful. However, by recognising that they are harmful, one sees the need to overcome them. If one employs appropriate methods then, gradually, the dominance of these negative states of mind begins to weaken. Of course this only comes about through practice and training. If we just leave things as they are, these states of mind won't naturally disappear. When we apply the training, however, change and transformation definitely take place.

Negative states of mind seem to occur quite spontaneously. If we allow them to remain, we become more acquainted with them, and might even welcome them. That in itself becomes a habituation, where the cycle becomes difficult to break. Therefore, the proper measure to apply when these states of mind arise, is to immediately recognise them as a fault, and try to apply the antidote to overcome them.

Having now shared a bit about the significance of the meditation practice, we can actually engage in meditation practice for a few minutes. For that, let us readjust our physical posture to be a comfortable one.

It will make the meditation really meaningful if we adopt a positive motivation, which means reminding ourselves of the main purpose of this meditation practice. If we can adopt an altruistic intention for our practice such as, 'May this practice become a cause to bring about happiness for all beings and eliminate suffering for all beings', then this reflection on the necessity for all beings to experience happiness and to free from suffering is the most noble intention that we can adopt. If we think, 'Others have exactly the same feelings, emotions as I do. Like me, they do not wish to experience any kind of misery or suffering, and they want to experience happiness. So it is of beneficial to take on the responsibility to assist others to achieve that goal, regardless of who they are'.

Normally we make a distinction between friends, enemies and strangers, and we have different sentiments towards each these three categories of beings. However, all three categories equally want to be happy, and be free from suffering. 'Thus it is fitting for me to wish all to have happiness, and to be free from suffering. And I'll take that responsibility by engaging in this practice of meditation'. Generating that intention is, in itself, a highly meaningful practice.

The object that we regularly choose for our meditation practice is our breath. Having spent some time in generating a positive motivation, we withdraw our mind from all other forms of distractions, and bring our entire focus and attention onto our breath. For the next few minutes we simply observe the breath. As we naturally

breathe in and breathe out, we keep our entire focus just on that. In this way that we can now adopt the meditation practice.

[meditation]

That will be sufficient for now.

It would be extremely beneficial to engage in some regular meditation practice just like the one we have just attempted to do. As you would have noticed, the method is not so difficult to understand—it's really quite a simple technique. The main problem we may encounter is maintaining our focus on the chosen object, which is the most important part of the practice.

Maintaining that focus on the object for a certain period of time is really quite hard at first. So the method is to initially make a commitment to maintain that focus for just a short time. Then slowly we can prolong that duration. That does, of course, require a certain amount of commitment. But when we see the benefits of the practice, we will see that it is worth making that commitment, and engaging in the discipline of this practice.

With the remaining time, if you have any questions, you are welcome to raise them. We can cover the text in later sessions.

Student: What's the best antidote for pride?

It is explained that the best antidote is, for example, thinking of the many categories of constituents. This technique is said to be a good antidote for pride because pride in itself is a pompous feeling assuming that one knows everything, or almost everything. However when one focuses on the various aspects of constituents, one begins to realise that there is a lot that one doesn't know yet. That helps to reduce a sense of pride where one thinks, 'I know everything' or 'I know much more than others'.

There are many categories of internal phenomena in the Buddhist teachings. For example, one's own constituents include the five aggregates, the six consciousness, the twelve sources and so forth. So there are many different elements that make up an individual being. When one starts thinking about these categories, one comes to a point where one starts feeling a little confused. 'What is that? How does one understand it?' Then that earlier sense of feeling pompous, and knowing everything, is naturally reduced.

I once mentioned that you don't have to go into great detail about what you don't understand. Just going into the cockpit of an aeroplane, for example, and seeing all the instruments can be quite baffling. There are so many dials and instruments in there, and one has no clue as to what their function is, or how they work and so forth.

I have heard that in western psychology there are over 200 terms for different parts of the brain. Within our own body, we might not know some of the names of our organs. Sometimes a medical term for something is mentioned, and you think, 'What is that? Where is it?' So, this is one method of reducing pride.

Pride is a sense of feeling a bit puffed up about having some sort of understanding or knowledge. It also has an

element of looking down upon others—that one is superior, and that others are inferior. It is as if one is on top of a mountain looking down upon everyone else below. When one begins to understand there is a lot that one doesn't yet understand or know, then that puffed up feeling begins to deflate.

However, one needs to also understand that there is a distinction between pride and self-confidence. In the Buddhist context, pride is a negative state of mind, which we could translate as egotistical pride. Whereas self-confidence is something that one needs in order to have the courage engage in worthwhile activities. When it comes to engaging in a positive activity, one needs to have self-confidence: 'I can do this. I have the ability and potential to do it. I can definitely do it' Self-confidence comes with a sense of having some qualities. If one lacks the self-confidence one would not be able to utilise those qualities. So self-confidence is essential as it assists one in utilising whatever qualities one may have.

Some might consider pride and self-confidence as one and the same thing, but they are not. When one understands the distinction between them, one understands that pride is to be avoided, and self-confidence is to be cultivated.

Student: Doesn't being patient with suffering mean that one just accepts the suffering and does nothing about it? Or should one apply the means to overcome the suffering?

Being patient with suffering is to be understood in its proper context, i.e. in accordance with the definition of patience. Patience means that the mind is not disturbed by events, in this case the event of suffering, or in the event of harm. Not allowing the mind to be disturbed in these instances is the definition of patience.

This doesn't mean that one has to willingly and begrudgingly endure suffering. If one does not accept suffering and feels weighed down by it, then that will cause anger to arise. And anger is the complete antithesis of patience. When the mind is not disturbed in the face of suffering, then one is able to find the means and solutions to overcome that suffering.

An example would be farmers who go out and till the soil. Sometimes they have to go out in the heat, or when it's cold, or raining, and so forth. But the farmers take on that suffering willingly, and because of that they are not daunted. Regardless of the elements, they still go out and work on the farm. If they were not able to accept those hardships, then as soon as it got too hot they would think, 'Oh it's too hot today' and not go out to the farm. If they feel that it's too cold then they will never get their farmland into a fertile condition for planting. With an understanding that there is purpose to suffering comes a sense that it's worthwhile experiencing those hardships. Therefore willingly accepting suffering means that even though there is discomfort, one does not allow that discomfort to disturb the mind. That is the meaning of being patient with suffering, and thus being able to accept it.

Some misunderstand patience as meaning suppressing anger—feeling angry inside and just holding on to it. That suppression can even be a cause of mental illness,

and it's not what patience means. If one's mind is disturbed and angry, one is not being patient at all; calling that patience is based on misunderstanding the real meaning of patience.

Of course this definition and explanation of patience comes from the Buddhist psychological point of view. Out there in the day-to-day world there might be significant explanations from another perspective. There might even be books about how some forms of patience will cause illness.

There might also be works stating that one needs to have anger, and that one needs to have pride. In a worldly context if we didn't have anger then how would you protect yourself from an enemy? The argument might be that in order to protect yourself from someone who harms you, you need to be angry. It sounds reasonable, even appealing, in a worldly context.

However, when one analyses things more subtly and considers the consequences of anger, one comes to understand that anger is a state of mind which harms not only the other, but oneself, i.e. it harms both parties. And these days it seems that there is a newer, more contemporary psychology that has a better insight into how the mind works. I'm not sure, but it sounds like there might be a newer approach to the science of the mind in a worldly setting.

Scientists are beginning to wonder whether there might be a distinction between the brain and consciousness, and that there might be a separate entity that we call consciousness. Thus emotions and so forth are not just physiological states, but are related to a mental, non-physical realm as well. That seems to be the beginning of some insight into the possibility of there being a consciousness that is separate from the brain. However I cannot comment too much on what scientists believe, as I don't have much knowledge about that.

Nowadays there are younger monks who are studying science. I had a conversation with one who said he had studied science for a while. I asked him what the meaning of science is. He told me that it means that it is something that has a limit. For example, a glass or thermos flask would have a limit as to how much water it would hold. But when I asked, 'So is this glass science because it has its own limit?' he didn't really respond to that. When I questioned him further, 'Well, would you consider objects as science because they have their own limits or identity?', he didn't really have much response to that either.

These sorts of discussions occur between monks because we are in the habit of debating. So when someone presents us with an idea we naturally ask questions about it right away.

Before we conclude for the evening, let us again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object we focus on is the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is the name of Buddha Shakyamuni. When we hear that chanting, try to keep the focus on that sound, and when the recitation subsides just remain in that empty, silent space for a few moments.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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