
taking on each alternate breath?

A: Geshe Doga says it is not necessary to link the technique of Giving and Taking with the breathing exercise. In fact it is recommended that first you practice this technique of Giving and Taking without focusing on the inhaling or the exhaling of the breath. You can first practice the Giving and Taking by simply imaging that, when you do the Taking, you take all the sufferings of other beings in the form of dark smoke. In English we use the term blackish smoke but literally in Tibetan it is a 'darkish light'. So whatever this darkish form, it enters you through your nostrils and then dissolves into your self-cherishing mind. Then all the causes of suffering disappear.

When you do the Giving, imagine that you give all your happiness to other beings by sending them white rays of light through your nostrils. Become familiar with the practice of Giving and Taking in this way, then afterwards you can link this technique with the breathing meditation. This is what the text instructs, so there must be some proper reason. Maybe it's initially difficult for some practitioners to do this technique with the breathing exercise. However, if it suits you and you don't find any problems with it, you can do this practice with the breathing meditation.

Q: Can Geshela elaborate on the aspect of purification. How it is purifying to do the Giving and Taking practice.?

A: In general when we talk of negative energies or positive energies we are not talking of visual forms, but the accumulation of these energies due to our mental attitudes towards others. We usually create our negativities by showing some negative attitude or state of mind towards either ordinary beings or higher beings like some holy object of refuge. Likewise, if we generate a positive state of mind towards these beings, then positive actions and positive energies follow. For example, if you show compassion towards others, then this helps to purify any negativities or harmful deeds we have done towards that being.

When we do the meditation of Giving and Taking, we blame our own self cherishing mind and show compassion towards others to whom we have caused suffering. It is this mental change or transformation which brings about the purifying of negativities.

There are many stories of the Indian master, the Great Asanga. One tells how, after striving in meditation for over 12 years, Asanga still had had no vision of Maitreya Buddha. As he came out of meditation he saw, lying on the road, a she-dog covered with maggots which were eating her skin and flesh. Asanga felt compassion for that dog, but didn't know how to remove the maggots without harming them. So, out of compassion, he tried to remove the maggots gently with his tongue. Then, suddenly, he was able to see Maitreya Buddha. Through the force of this compassion, he purified the last of his obscurations to being able to see the Maitreya Buddha.

Now we will chant the Buddha's Mantra. Again, sit in meditation posture, bring the mind inward and place its

focus on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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