
When you have true self-awareness and a clear understanding of yourself, you will also have a better understanding of other beings. When you see someone with a personality problem, you will be able to see why that problem is there – because of some negative state of mind. For example, a person whose mind is used to anger will always get angry very quickly. Likewise, a person whose mind is used to desire or lust will always be trapped into mentally or physically pursuing the object of desire.

The purpose of this exercise of knowing one's self is to learn how to do the right thing from your own side. Every action and thought you generate is not predetermined or conditioned by your outer situation. For example, if you are faced with an angry person you have to ask yourself, 'Why should I respond with anger? If I always give way to anger it will destroy my peace of mind.' Try to understand this and put it into practice.

If you use your meditation practice to develop an understanding of your own mind, you will gain enormous benefits. You will come to know the various states of the mind. By knowing this, you will be more skilful in handling the various states of mind and controlling emotions as they arise. For instance, you know how easy it is for the emotion of anger to arise if you are faced with someone directing anger at you. Or, vice versa, if you show anger to someone, it is easy for him or her to respond with anger. It's not something that happens with a stranger or an enemy. If you show anger to those close to you, like your close friend or your children, they can easily respond with anger.

Attachment, on the other hand, can cause us to suffer because we may show attachment to someone who does *not* respond to us. In the long run, attachment can be a greater source of suffering.

Whatever meditation or spiritual practice we follow, the aim is to develop an understanding of ourselves so that we can correct our faulty thoughts or deeds. It is important that we apply these spiritual teachings to our thoughts and actions. Whatever spiritual teaching or religion we follow, they all have the potential to benefit us, because they all focus on the aim of producing a good human being.

Conversely, if you do not apply the teachings to correct your ways of thinking and your daily actions, then no matter how much you study and how much time you spend following a spiritual tradition, it will not transform your mind. If someone suffering from attachment or anger does not apply the teachings to overcoming those problems, then the teachings or meditations will be of no benefit to that person.

It is even possible that such a person will find fault with the actual teachings. However, it is because that person has not applied the teachings to their own thoughts and actions that they have not benefited. Eventually, such a person may even generate a wrong view of the spiritual teachings and question their validity by saying that the teachings have nothing to offer anyone in terms of solving their problems.

However, if we apply the teachings and put them into practice, we will enjoy the benefits. Obviously, the more one decreases the negative states of mind, such as desire or anger, through one's practice, the more one will increase peace and happiness in one's life. Thus, applying the spiritual teachings to overcoming all our negative states of mind is essential for us to find peace and happiness in our own lives, and also to bring peace and happiness within our family and our immediate community. For our family to live together in peace and harmony it requires us each to maintain a peaceful atmosphere within us, free of all hostility and strong attachment. So, try to understand that this practice of meditation is not just a matter of wanting to learn about some interesting spiritual tradition or training. Most importantly, we follow a spiritual teaching because we see that it is of immediate benefit in our daily life.

Geshe-la said that he did not plan to discuss all of these issues, but once he started, it just happened! He says that, even though he may be sitting on a high throne, he never feels that he is higher than the people who come to listen to his teachings. Rather, his attitude to everyone here is that we are all part of one family. Therefore, he uses this opportunity to say whatever he believes will be beneficial and gives teachings with the attitude of one friend or family member to another. He tries to discuss whatever issue he thinks is pertinent and beneficial to share with you.

Now we will chant the Buddha's mantra. As at the beginning of the session we choose the correct sitting posture, relax the body and then calm the mind by overcoming outer distractions. Then, as we chant, we focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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