



Achieving Inner Happiness Through Meditation

Part Three of Fedor Stracke's series on meditation.

Two types of happiness

There are two types of happiness, mental happiness and outer happiness. Outer happiness comes about through meeting

with the external object, and is transitory. Mental happiness comes about through meditation and positive thought, is stable and does not turn into suffering.

It is a common experience that one does not experience happiness if one is not mentally happy, even if there is an apparent abundance of outer happiness. Mental happiness and suffering are stronger than outer happiness or suffering. If one is mentally unhappy, then even one's favorite food loses its flavor, but if one is truly happy in one's mind, then one will not be affected by outer problems.

Outer happiness depends on outer causes and conditions, and inner happiness depends on inner causes and conditions – positive mental states and merits.

We will not get a result of a practice that we do not do

One main tool to generate positive mental states is meditation. The ancient texts cite five faults that prevent one from having a successful meditation, and eight antidotes to overcome these faults.

The first fault is laziness, and the first four antidotes – faith, aspiration, enthusiastic effort and pliancy – are specifically to overcome laziness.

Faith in Dharma practice opens the door to the Dharma. To develop faith, one contemplates the benefits of Dharma practice. The more one sees the benefits, the more one will be inspired to practice. In this way, faith becomes the basis for *aspiration* – the wish to actually engage in Dharma practice.

Aspiration in turn is the starting point of *enthusiastic effort*, which leads to mental and physical *pliancy* – the best antidote against laziness.

Laziness is a stagnant mental state that prevents one from engaging in virtuous practice. It prevents one from sitting

down on the meditation cushion in the first place, causes one to break off one's practice in the middle, and seduces one to say, shortly before the end is reached, "This is good enough." Laziness comes in many shapes and guises.

- *The laziness attracted to reclining, lying down and sleeping*

This laziness causes one to rather lie down on the sofa to have a nap than meditate.

- *The laziness that is attracted to worldly activity*

In this case, there is boundless energy to go out, or watch a movie, but the thought of meditation induces a leaden heaviness in body and mind. This laziness is very deceptive, because someone might be very active from a worldly point of view, but very lazy from a Dharma point of view.

- *The laziness of procrastination*

With this laziness, one will definitely start meditating regularly from tomorrow morning onwards, or once all the conditions come together. Ten years later, one still want to start tomorrow.

- *The laziness of low self-esteem*

One has the feeling one could not possibly attain realizations. To counteract this, it is recommended that we contemplate our buddha nature. One has the potential to become enlightened because the clear nature of one's mind is not one with the mental afflictions, just as the sky is not one with the clouds. All one needs to do is put the Dharma into practice.

Since enlightenment is the most difficult of all attainments, one does not need to have the feeling that there is something one could not do.

Not every thought is bad

Lama Yeshe once said that the point of meditation is not to induce a coma.

Real meditation has nothing to do with inducing unclear and dull states of mind removed from reality, or with the notion that if one would just stop thinking, all problems would be solved.

In fact one is greatly warned of the dangers of these ideas. Actual meditation emphasises the importance of clear and intelligent mental states, because it is only with such a mind

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that one can perceive the nature of reality. There are two forms of meditation: single-pointed and analytical.

Single-pointed meditation

The great Indian Buddhist saint Kamalashila explained in his *Stages of Meditation*: “Only the mind that naturally engages an internal focus continuously after having calmed the wandering to external objects, and which is endowed with ecstasy and pliancy, is called calm abiding.”

In single-pointed meditation one trains the mind in maintaining a vivid and clear mental focus of a virtuous inner object. During that time any mental activity other than the continual mindfulness of the object and introspection is regarded as a distraction.

The aspired mental state is a single-pointed state of mind characterized by clarity, certain intensity and a type of refined intensive bliss that never becomes boring. But this is impossible to achieve if one's mind is not trained in analytical meditation.

At present the mind is mostly populated by thoughts or attachment and anger, which distract it to external objects. Through a gentle yet complete focus on an internal virtuous object, these disturbing thoughts gradually subside. This can, however, only happen if initially one lessens one's anger and attachment through meditating on love and impermanence, and takes care that in the post-meditation period one's actions do not generate further negative thoughts. Analytical meditations are therefore the best preparations for the attainment of calm abiding, and are also the best method to pacify the mind, once calm abiding is attained.

Analytical meditation

In analytical meditation, where one also needs to maintain an internal focus, one analyses the nature and characteristics of the meditation object, as in the meditation on impermanence, selflessness or love and compassion. These meditations immediately transform the mind and become a protection against harmful emotions such as anger, jealousy or attachment. They also form the basis for calm abiding. Meditations on love and compassion counteract anger, and meditations on impermanence counteract attachment.

For beginners, analytical meditation is easier to do than calm abiding, and while it is important to do calm abiding

meditation every day, analytical meditation becomes more effective in transforming the mind, in both the short- and long-term.

One of the most important analytical meditations is to analyse the nature of one's mind when one is happy or sad so as to recognise the mental states that cause mental happiness and suffering.

The next step is to increase mental states conducive to mental happiness such as love, compassion and wisdom, which are already present in one's mind, and generate new ones that one does not already have. At the same time, one needs to lessen one's harmful mental states, such as anger and attachment and also prevent the generation of new harmful mental states. This is done with analytical meditation.

Accumulation of merit

High-level bodhisattvas spend their time in between meditative equipoise by accumulating merits. When they recognize that they have enough merits to progress to another level, they again enter meditative equipoise to free the mind from a further level of mental afflictions.

If high-level bodhisattvas can only progress in meditation if they have sufficient merits, despite having already achieved the union of calm abiding and special insight, then the same is all the more true for ordinary beings. Merits are needed as a condition conducive to one's meditation. That is why it is good to accumulate merits by practicing generosity, morality, patience and enthusiasm. Engaging in practices such as the seven limbs, reading sutras, reciting mantras and so forth is also strongly recommended.

By accumulating the internal conditions for mental happiness through a combination of single-pointed meditation and analytical meditation on the basis of accumulating merits and purifying the mind, one will experience internal development and become a happier person – regardless of whether one wants it or not! ❁

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