



Compassion Day

Guided Meditation – Joyous Effort

Preparation

Make yourself comfortable in a good position for meditation. Relax your body and mind. Let your awareness settle in the present moment by mindfully watching your breath for a few minutes.

Motivation

Before we begin let's clarify our motivation for doing this meditation. Perhaps we can think: I am doing this meditation to reflect on the purpose of life and particularly to increase my inspiration to make my life as useful as possible for myself and all other beings.

Main Meditation

Firstly, let's take a moment to reflect on one powerful quotation by a famous buddhist saint, Shantideva.

"All the suffering in the world comes from seeking pleasure for oneself. All the happiness in the world comes from seeking pleasure for others."

In your own experience, do you feel this is true? In a way, this quote helps to highlight our individual and global problem of self-centeredness, doesn't it?

So today we have come here together to celebrate compassion and also reflect and appreciate the life and birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama who we can see is a clear example of someone who has really transcended self concern. Let's take a moment to imagine how wonderful the world would be, how much happier and peaceful place it could be if the world were filled with more compassionate, kind people like His Holiness. For example, imagine what it would be like if people were able to practice greater patience and wisdom in the face of adversity. If people were only motivated by thoughts of non-harming and compassion in their actions. If people had equal respect for all living beings, including the animals. Reflect on any other examples you can think of and then try to feel....How wonderful that would be!

Is this true in your own experience?

So, how can we try to accomplish this kind of compassionate world?

This saint, Shantideva also said that if we wish to walk around the whole world isn't it easier and more

comfortable to cover your own feet with leather than to cover the whole world? Similarly rather than trying to change the world out there, in order to experience a more compassionate world, isn't it more practical to protect our own hearts, to begin with developing a more compassionate attitude in our own minds first. Is this not true?

How do we begin to do that?

Let's consider that right now, we have a human body and human intelligence. We live in a country where we have freedom to practice any spiritual path we choose and generally speaking we have enough resources to sustain our lives. If we check up, in comparison to many other countries and cultures such as over the billion people in China having restricted freedom of speech, and human rights, great poverty for millions of people in Africa, or the situation of spiritual and cultural suffocation of many Tibetan people, having all these things in our lives is a very special and rare occurrence in this world. Take a moment to reflect on this and compare your situation to one or more of these situations. Imagine how your life would be.

So although it is true that we do have problems, we can also recognize that in these basic ways, our lives are very fortunate, we have more freedom.

Not only that, but we are alive here only for a certain amount of years and as much as we may wish live forever, this is not the case. Is this not true? Similarly, in reality it is unclear how long we will live? Take a moment to consider this. In reality, our bodies and our life are very fragile, like water bubbles or drops of dew, and could finish at any time, in any moment.

Since this is the case, we need to sincerely reflect on and ask ourselves what is of most value to do with this precious time we have, which is passing, almost in a dream-like way, and very quickly. Isn't this our personal responsibility to continuously do that and not cheat ourselves by staying unaware of this and possibly wasting our precious life. Isn't this the greatest kindness to ourselves and others?

One way to make our life most meaningful is to gradually awaken within us a greater wish to benefit others. Why would we do that? If we check up we begin to recognize that in reality, they are the source of all our happiness. Firstly, we relied on the kindness of our parents to bring us into this world and initially support and nourish us when we were quite helpless as children. We relied on the kindness of teachers to educate us. We relied on the kindness friends and peers to teach us social values and have many enjoyments in our lives. We rely on employers now to give us income to support our lives and our families. Indeed, when we investigate we discover all our enjoyments, food, clothing, shelter etc all come from the kindness of infinite other beings. Is this not true! Although we may not feel this all the time, when we check up, we discover that we are deeply connected and to others and dependant on them for our temporary and long term spiritual happiness. So how kind are other beings! How precious and important they are to me. They are like my heart. See if you can feel this.

But right now so many of these beings are less fortunate than me. Is this not true?

Since we are all the same in wishing and deserving happiness, even the animals and we have a dependant relationship, their happiness is my happiness. There is no difference. Yes?

So let's ask ourselves....how can I help them? Ask yourself this and try to make some clear conviction or aspiration on how you can help others with this precious and short life we have.

Finally as additional inspiration for us, let's recite and reflect on this Indian poem together.

Indian Poem:

This day is a special day, it is yours. Yesterday slipped away. It cannot be filled with more meaning. About tomorrow nothing is known. But this day, today, is yours, make use of it. Today you can make someone happy. Today you can help another. This day is a special day, it is yours.

Hold this prayer for a moment.

Dedication

Now let's dedicate. Whatever aspirations to benefit others we have made during this practice let's dedicate our meditation so that each of our wishes to benefit ourselves and others in this world may very quickly be fulfilled. May all my actions only become the cause for my world and this world to become a more compassionate place.

Composed by Ven Angie Muir - April 2013