

THE LUMINOUS NATURE OF THE MIND

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It is necessary for us to familiarize with and get used to good attitudes, but our habituation to bad emotions such as hatred makes a huge obstacle. Thus, we need to identify the various forms of bad afflictive emotions and combat them right on the spot. If you gradually become accustomed to controlling bad attitudes, over a period of years it is possible even for someone who often used to get very angry to become calm.

Some people might feel that you lose your independence if you do not let your mind just wander where it wants to, if you try to control it. This is not so; if your mind is proceeding in a correct way, you already have independence, but if it is proceeding in an incorrect way, it is necessary to exercise control.

Is it possible to get rid of the afflictive emotions completely or is it possible only to suppress them? From the Buddhist point of view, the conventional nature of the mind is clear light, and thus defilements do not reside in the very nature of the mind; defilements are adventitious, temporary, and can be removed. From the ultimate point of view the nature of the mind is its emptiness of inherent existence.

If afflictive emotions, such as hatred, were in the very nature of the mind, then from its inception the mind would always have to be hateful, for instance, since that would be its nature. However, that this is not so is obvious; it is only under certain circumstances that we become angry, and when

those circumstances are not present, anger is not generated. This indicates that the nature of hatred and the nature of mind are different even if in a deeper sense they both are consciousnesses thus having a nature of luminosity and knowing.

What are the circumstances that serve as a basis for generating hatred? It is generated because we superimpose upon phenomena an unattractiveness or badness that exceeds what is actually there. With this as a basis we get angry at what prevents our desires. Hence, the foundation of a mind of hatred is not valid. However, a mind of love does have a valid foundation. When, over a long period of time, an attitude that has a valid foundation competes with an attitude that does not, the one with the valid foundation will win.

Therefore, if you familiarize steadily over a long period of time with good attitudes that have a valid foundation, bad attitudes that do not will gradually diminish. When training physically in broad-jumping, for instance, the basis of the process is the gross physical body, and thus there is a limit to how much you can jump. However, since the mind is an entity of mere luminosity and knowing, when the basis of training is the mind, it is possible through gradual familiarization to develop salutary attitudes limitlessly.

We ourselves know that the mind can remember many things; putting one thing in mind and then another, it is possible to keep a great amount in memory. Nowadays we cannot retain an extraordinary amount, but we are using only grosser levels of consciousness; if we utilize more subtle levels, we can retain even more.

Qualities that depend on the mind can be increased limitlessly. As much as you implement and increase the antidotal attitudes that counter afflictive emotions, so much do those unfavorable attitudes decrease, finally being extinguished altogether. Hence, it is said that since we have a mind that has a nature of mere luminosity and knowing, all of us have the fundamental substances necessary for the attainment of Buddhahood

A basic Buddhist point is that in dependence upon the mind's being essentially an entity of mere luminosity and knowing, it can be shown that the mind can eventually know everything. This, from a philosophical viewpoint, supports the position that good attitudes can be increased limitlessly.

In terms of daily practice it is very helpful to identify the conventional nature of the mind and concentrate on it. The reason why it is hard to identify the nature of the mind is that it is as if covered over by our own conceptions. Therefore, first, stop remembering what happened in the past and stop thinking about what might happen in the future; let the mind flow of its own accord without conceptual overlay. Let the mind rest in its natural state, and observe it. In the beginning, when you are not used to this practice, it is quite difficult, but in time the mind appears like clear water. Then, stay with this unfabricated mind without allowing conceptions to be generated.

For this meditation early morning, when your mind has awakened and is clear but your senses are not yet fully operating, is better. It helps not to have eaten too much the night before nor to sleep too much; this makes the mind lighter and sharper the next morning. Gradually the mind will become more and more stable; mindfulness and memory will become clearer.

See if this practice makes your mind more alert throughout the day. As a temporary benefit your thoughts will be tranquil. As your memory improves, gradually you can develop clairvoyance, which is due to an increase of mindfulness. As a long term benefit, because your mind has become more alert and sharp, you can utilize it in whatever field you want.

If you are able to do a little meditation daily, withdrawing this scattered mind on one object inside, it is very helpful. The conceptuality that runs on thinking of good things, bad things, and so forth and so on will get a rest. It provides a little vacation just to set a bit in non-conceptuality and have a rest.