Calming the Waves of the Emotions

"Everything that arises and which makes us unhappy comes from us. We have it within ourselves."

When you feel anger towards someone you should realise that it is your anger, not the other person's anger. To start with you just stop talking and look into your own anger. If what a person is saying makes you respond, it is because you have magnetised yourself to be angry. You have to analyse yourself - ask why you are angry. This is normally something you should do when you have a little peace, maybe after a couple of hours, when you are a little more relaxed. You go through the process of that anger. You imagine you turn into the other person and the other person turns into you, and you have a dialogue with each other. Find out why the other person made you angry. Try to find an appreciation of the person. I do not think you will be able to achieve that spontaneously, you may be able to achieve it after some time. Poison cannot be overcome just in one treatment: you keep repeating the same practice many times.

Initially, if you have never done any practice, you do not know you are angry. If you meditate you come to realise, "I am angry." Then if you keep doing the same practice, the time it takes to get out of your state of anger may be shorter. Before it took one day, later half a day, and then one hour; then eventually you may be able to overcome the anger as it arises, or perhaps as you are fighting with it you will be able to stop the anger. You have to keep on working at it the whole time. If it happens with the same person again and again it becomes almost like a story. If it is the same person repeating the same thing, then before you go to see that person you have to do some good meditation. You prepare yourself, you train yourself thinking, "I should not be angry."

If you look at the positive things in your life, and at what is going well, you will have a more positive experience. If you focus on the negative things, then that becomes your experience. If you do not want to change, then focusing on the negative is the wrong thing for you to do because you will stay negative. However, if you realise that there are negatives in your life and you do want to change them, then it is necessary to look into them. If you have ten negative things, you have to deal with one at a time and get rid of it, making nine negatives. Unless you are working on your mind and want to change, there is no benefit just looking at the negative aspect. Maybe then it is much wiser to look at the positive things. However in order to change and improve it is necessary to look at our own situation fully.

If you have a house, do you look each year at what needs repairing, or do you look at what you do not need to repair? What do you do? Suppose a door handle is coming off. If you have a door that is broken, then it is much better to repair it, so you have a decent door. Looking at the negative is not just about increasing the negative, but about how to change

negative to positive. Appreciation means that everything that is happening to you and every experience you are having you accept. You do not reject it. It is useful. You think, "I accept this, so it no longer gives me negative feelings." Then you do not feel that as soon as you hear this sound or see that person, you want to run away. When you truly accept, then you are able to deal with whatever is happening.

On the other hand, if something very negative is happening in your life and you are not able to deal with it, then it may be best to distance yourself from it. It depends on how strong you are. If you are not able to handle a particular atmosphere, then the best thing to do is to get away from it so you are not affected. If you are talking about Vajrayana practice, then people talk a great deal about transformation. In that case you do not run away, you are able to face things. If there are obstacles or negativity that you are not able to face, then of course it is much better to move away from them.

Sometimes we feel that we really do not want to forgive someone. First of all you must understand that, in fact, you do want to forgive, because there is no benefit in not forgiving. You are not going to achieve anything. Forgiving is a much better objective. When you see that, you forgive. Even if you are not able to do this the first time or the second time, nevertheless you wish, "May I be able to forgive one day," and then if you keep that always in your mind, one day you may be able to forgive.

I am often asked why there are still so many wars around the world. Maybe our minds have become very sensitive. A few thousand years ago, although it was the same mind, there was less opportunity for the mind to become angry or violent. When there was fighting in certain areas, it was simple fighting, because the world was more simple. Even if the fighting was physical, when it was finished it was finished. There was no continuation or resistance. Today our minds are very active. We are constantly changing our thinking because of our way of life. In early times English people were only able to experience England. There was no opportunity to go to France or Germany, these places were too far away. At that time there were fewer causes of anger and our minds were less active. Now we can travel the whole world within twenty four hours. Our mind has become very sensitive and we hold many negative accumulations. When we are reborn, we already have the seed of anger and the seed of violence. I suppose maybe that has something to do with the continuation of wars.

There has always been violence in different countries but in the past we did not hear about it because there was no communication. No radio, no telephones or internet, no international newspapers or magazines. Even though there may have been much violence in a particular country, people did not hear of it. Violence may not be worsening, but communication is getting faster. For example, you can hear later the same day about what happened in the morning in Nepal. In earlier times it may have taken ten or twenty years in order to hear something from a distant place. Perhaps this faster communication coupled with the anger caused by our greater sensitivity has something to do with the continuing presence of wars and violence.

It also seems to me that the media, television and radio are encouraging fighting by saying,

"Look what this country is doing to you. What are you going to do about it?" Their job is to present information, but the information they present often gives us more reasons and ways to fight. If they are dealing with family problems, they are very good at reporting who is going out with your husband or your wife. They help you to discover things which increase your anger. Even if they are really trying to solve problems, the nature of their interest tends to cause more fighting and more separations. I think it is very good to have a free press and freedom of information. When one is able to freely publish information, that is very good. However, the media needs to try to be a little more compassionate in finding ways to help people. It needs to find ways to bring people together and not distort information.

It is important to learn to communicate in a non-violent way. If you have a spiritual path and you realise that your neighbour is constantly angry about your simple actions, such as where you put your rubbish, how you pick your flowers, how you cut your hedge, according to Buddhism you should not go and shout at your neighbour. You should not try to discuss with the neighbour and say, "Look, I am doing this and you are not being reasonable." Instead you should look into yourself and see why you are irritating other people. You should analyse yourself to see what you are doing.

If you are irritating someone, maybe both of you equally misunderstand each other. If you are irritating a whole family of six people, then you must be doing something wrong, even though you think you are doing everything right according to the law and according to your beliefs. Then you try to sit down and ask yourself questions and analyse. Think about what your neighbour told you and ask, "What did I do?" Try to go back and do the research. That way you may discover something or realise what you are doing wrong.

If you are not able to discover anything, then it is often said to be due to cause and result, karma. In a past life maybe you did what your neighbour is now doing to you. Due to that karmic connection you are having this present experience. Therefore you should think in terms of purification rather than anger. You should recognise that this must be due to wrong actions in your past life. Although you do not feel that you did anything wrong in this life, maybe this is due to something you did in your past lives, and you may be able to purify this. You apologise to the neighbour as best as you can rather than being angry.

There is another kind of investigation you can do. It is more like a mind investigation in which you are finding the cause of the misunderstanding, the cause of the anger. You find the things which make you angry and make you feel that you have to say something. Where does this come from? You should keep on analysing until you find something. You keep looking until you can say, "Okay, now I have found how to deal with it," or "I cannot find anything therefore no cause exists." Anger subsides by itself through investigation. In all of the teachings it is said that if you have this kind of experience and it makes you angry, then you have to look at your anger. When anger prompts you to want to beat someone or to say angry words to someone, ask yourself where this comes from within you. There is another way of dealing with it, but I do not think it is a wise thing to do. That is to say to the person, "Look, we have to talk, I'm not doing the things you accuse me of." That is not necessary. Everything that arises and which makes us unhappy comes from us, we have it within ourselves.

If we look outside, then there is so much samsaric life and so many things happening. Sometimes we are not able to deal with it. If you see ten people, one person will make you happy, another person will make you sad, another will make you angry and so on. Everything is projected onto each individual person. I am angry because this person does not laugh nicely, this person does not talk nicely, this person does not walk nicely.
I like it - I dislike it. Everything is projected outwards and is making us unhappy or happy. All the time this causes difficulties in our experience.
If we look into our mind, no longer looking outside, then there is no such thing as a mind that makes us happy or unhappy. If you see a person who makes you very upset, and you keep looking and applying your feelings to that person it will make you more upset. It keeps you thinking more and more, then you become more and more upset, each time going further and further.

If instead you just leave that person alone and look into yourself and ask where this feeling comes from, this is called investigation of oneself. The person is only the object; being upset or not upset has nothing to do with it, him, or her, it has to do with how you project yourself onto that person. You look into yourself and investigate where the feeling comes from, "Is it from my hair or my brain, my heart, my organs?" I do not think anybody can find a thing called "feeling upset" existing within oneself. It is like chasing a shadow: you keep on chasing and chasing until you realise it is a shadow. When you realise, "Oh, this is really just my shadow," then the desire to chase no longer exists. "How could I chase it because wherever I go this shadow is there." Understanding somehow comes and then you have acceptance. You become peaceful.

Therefore, if you do not want to be samsaric and if you do not want to suffer, the best solution is to look into yourself and investigate. You do not need to become negative in investigation - that way you will never be able to achieve anything. You have to go stage by stage. You have to discover the experience of happiness and the experience of upset. Even if it is the next-door-neighbours making you angry, your fellow students making you angry, your family making you angry, each time you look into yourself rather than fighting the other person.

When dealing with emotions, I think the meditation technique is not to try to block your emotions, because you cannot block emotions. You should welcome your emotions: they are like toy games. You play with emotions. If a mature person is playing a game with a toy car, he or she does not try to get into the car and then get angry saying, "I can't get into my car." The first thing you realise is that it is a toy car. The second thing is that it is a toy car, but you enjoy playing with it. Many older people play with toy trains. Some very old people like to play with trains. Just like that your emotions should be played with rather than blocked; how could you block emotions, unless you cut your brain waves? There is nothing wrong with emotions, they are part of you. It is said that if you go to the ocean you will see waves, big, wors and small waves. They are part of the sea itself. We are like people who are great swimmers, who play with waves. It is the same thing.

There is a different way of transforming negative emotions. You can just leave the emotions

and accept that you have them, and look for any positivity, or you can look through the negative and ask, "What is negative, who is the creator of the negative?" Maybe you cannot find anything called negative except that which you yourself created. Then you may have the understanding that you are the one who creates this negativity. It is not outside, it is within you. Transformation can be achieved by these investigations and by looking through the negative emotion. There are different ways of doing this, sometimes through investigation, sometimes just through acceptance. You do not get rid of negative emotions, but through understanding, the fact of them being negative no longer exists. Perhaps you call that transformation or understanding. I think patience is very important for whatever you wish to achieve, not only if you are on a spiritual path. In all aspects of life patience helps you to achieve things.

Whenever you have problems or arguments with your family, they may say, "You're a Buddhist, you shouldn't be doing these things," or another person says, "you're a Christian doing these things," and it becomes an argument. When the arguments go on so long one may think, "Maybe if the other one thinks I have given up religion, it will improve my family relationship." In reality, when you are not getting on too well, that kind of thinking will not change anything; even if you give up religion it will make no difference to the relationship. The fights, the jealousy and misunderstandings will go on, no matter what you do.

If you have ten people in your home and all ten become Buddhists, still you will have arguments. If you are a non-believer, still you have the same arguments. If all ten are Muslim, still the arguments go on. You should not follow a religion in order to overcome your arguments. Because arguments are always there, and you may be disappointed and say, "I thought the arguments would lessen, but the situation is getting worse. Now we both have the same beliefs and still we're having the same arguments."

You should not look at family problems as having anything to do with being Buddhist or not. Buddhism is much deeper than family arguments, it has more to do with your faith and your beliefs. If our spiritual path does not solve our family problems, what does it solve? The purpose of it is to improve your understanding and to give you a broader view. Previously you may have had a very narrow mind, thinking that as long as you, your family, your friends, are quite well and quite happy, you do not care what is happening to other people. Following a genuine spiritual path means that all other beings become like your family, so you care about other people too. You are concerned about others and you are not being narrow-minded.

Some people say, "If I'm always thinking about others, what about myself? Maybe I'll get lost myself." But you never forget yourself, you are always there. Even if you think about others, you are already included there all the time. You do not need to worry too much about losing your self-identity or forgetting to feed and dress yourself, or losing your happiness. Your happiness is always there. You will never forget to feed yourself, no matter how much loving kindness and compassion you have. As soon as you are hungry you will remember to feed yourself, so you do not need to worry too much about that.

When relationships break up people become angry; they try to be compassionate but their

attachment is so strong that they become angry. Attachment is very strong and when you try to separate from something there is always pain; that is what you have to go through and this is hard when you are young. When you are my age it does not really matter: you can have separations every day, it does not give you much pain. In a relationship it is best not to cling too much to each other. From the start, as soon as you start loving each other, try not to make it into very strong glue. That way when you need to tear apart there is not so much suffering. You always have a space between the two people and, if you are living together, it makes a very happy time. When you are no longer living together there is not that much suffering.

If someone is being unkind to you, you should say, "Thank you, you give me freedom." Try to be grateful. I have found it very difficult to understand the European system, because once you fall in love with each other you are not allowed to see or talk to anybody, you are not even allowed to telephone somebody. Each time you say, "I telephoned this person," you have to report everything that was said. If you are five minutes late, you have to say where you were, what you were doing. That is no longer being a human being, you have become a prisoner. You talk a great deal about freedom and then have you not become prisoners?

In relationships you need to be able to manage people's expectations. You have to be honest and if you are not able to manage the expectations you should say so. Why do you have to pretend? I think if you start to pretend, then that pretence grows all the time and you have to maintain a lie. You should tell people immediately very straight and say, "Sorry, this is my limit. If there is something I can do for you I will, but if it is beyond that, then you should go to somebody else."

The best people to give advice are those who show their limit, and also those who show you where to go for further advice. Many people want to maintain their friends, they want to maintain their own position, they fear losing somebody, so they do not want to send you to someone else. I think that is quite a big mistake. The best thing is to tell the person to go to someone else for what they need or expect.

I have children, but I never managed to educate them according to my own ideas. I think my ideas are too worrying, the Orient is too far away. I suppose when children grow up in this country and their friends are here then, if you are different from all their friends, children are not willing to listen. Children will listen to what the majority of people say. The important thing is to try to be helpful and useful for your children whenever you can.

I found it difficult to educate my own children. It is similar to being a doctor: you cannot treat your own children, you cannot bear to operate on them - you have to find another doctor. If you are a therapist, you cannot do therapy on your own children: you are too close, so you have to find another person. I am very good at giving advice to everyone, except my own children. Children think, "He is my father." They do not think of you as a person who has understanding of worldly life. A father is a father and a mother is a mother. "My father talks too much," or "my mother talks too much." That is all you get from your own children and it is difficult to educate them.

You may think, "My children will not listen to me." If there are problems between you and your children, it is much better to leave it alone. That way at least they will not have a bad feeling like, "My parents keep saying things that they don't know anything about." If they think they know best, it is better to let them think that way. If they think their parents know something and they want to get advice, maybe they will come when they need help.

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