Forgiveness is Fundamental to Purify the Heart

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 22:05

Okay, so we can begin our practice by just sitting quietly. And once we're a little settled.

So just a little opening *metta*, just to bring someone to mind whom we have a natural or an easy, warm regard for. Just as they come into your mind, just to offer them from the heart your good wishes. May you be safe, well and happy. May you live contented in harmony with the world.

We can bring to mind those who are near and dear to us. We can bring to mind friends, people at work, whomever we wish. There's also a neutral person, someone we see but don't know.

Turning the stream of compassion towards ourselves. Opening outwards towards each other. Radiating outwards to our neighbours and neighbourhood. To all the people in our country, all the peoples of the world. All people on earth and to all beings in all directions.

So we can begin now with forgiveness. We're working first of all with people who we've upset, we've hurt in some way. So remember, you don't have to go for the big one. It can be somebody who's not so bad.

So as that person, as that event comes to mind, see what comes up in the heart, observe your relationship to what comes up. Someone whom we have hurt. Careful not to let the mind wander. Be honest about what you're experiencing, the hurt, the guilt, the shame, sense of remorse. There's also that self-righteousness, they deserved it. Just acknowledging that all these mental states are unwholesome.

And just as the heart begins to mellow, perhaps you feel it's the time just to ask for forgiveness. Just picturing them in your mind, talking to them, telling them how you feel. And you bring yourself round to saying, please forgive me. I'm sorry. Perhaps you can see them forgiving you if you've got an imagination. And if so, can you let their love back in? And at some point to wish them well. And just allow them to fade away.

Of course, when you're doing these practices yourself, you can take your time. But here we're just touching into them.

So now is the time to forgive others. So bringing somebody to mind who's upset us. And again, just as they come into the mind, that event, just to hold it fairly steady, to get in touch with what comes up. The hurt, the desire for revenge, all that sort of stuff, and how you're relating to that. Somebody has upset us.

I always think noting can be very useful at these times. You sort of say, well, this is how hurt feels. This is how anger feels. Just so that we're very honest with ourselves.

And then at some point to begin to feel that maybe you can forgive them. And you can say, I'm not going to take advantage. I'm not going to get my own back. When we say to somebody, I forgive you, sometimes it feels as though it's coming from a sort of prideful place, like I forgive you, like somebody in high power forgiving you, letting you off. But it is coming from a heart which wants to reestablish that friendship, reestablish that communication. Perhaps you can find another way of saying it.

And perhaps you can see in them a sense of really the desire to be reconciled. And again just wishing them well. And allowing them to fade away.

And so finally we come to ourselves, remembering the little contemplations there on dependent origination and *kamma*. So again, finding something where we've done harm to ourselves. Physically we might have been putting stuff in the body which isn't very good for us, or putting it in dangerous situations. And the heart, what would be done with what we put into our hearts and through our minds? What have we watched? What have we done which has undermined us, has done us harm? Just choose one that you can sort of feel you can work with.

Just in the same way, just accept totally the harm that we've done ourselves, the consequences. And to speak to ourselves gently, that we're ready to accept the consequences. We can bear them. We can bear with them.

And all these voices that we might hear of self-recrimination and blaming ourselves and all that. Again, you just open up to that. Just receive it. Just allow those voices to express themselves. And then some, in a way, to sort of embrace it. Embrace it with loving kindness. Embrace it with a sense of care. This is a part of our hearts. Our hearts which has turbulence. It's upset. And just holding it in that sort of gentle embrace.

And just speaking to ourselves. Gently. Gently. Sounds a bit odd, but you can just try, I forgive you. I forgive myself. I forgive myself. How does that feel? I'm not going to beat myself up any more. I forgive myself.

And then to sort of formulate a resolution, something that you really intend not to do again. Of course, you might do it again and you have to go through this process. But the intention is not to behave like, not to do anything like that again to myself and indeed to others.

This brings us to the end of the forgiving practice. You'll find the notes are more detailed. And if you go onto the website and go onto resources and e-books, I've written a little book on forgiveness. Towards the End of Forgiveness, it's called. And there's a little monologue, Angulimala, if you've never heard it before, you can have a go and listen to that.

So we can sit quietly now, just resting with the heart, and perhaps it's in a good place now, perhaps it feels warm and happy. If it's not, that's not a problem, we also work with what's there.

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