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It would be good to spend some time in meditation. I would assume that everyone is already quite skilled in meditating. As the technique of meditation becomes quite well known people seem to be quite eager and excited to practise. I suppose people here would be at this stage and are quite eager. Meditation seems to be quite well-known, possibly because people find some benefits in meditation.

When we look into how we have spent most of our life so far, particularly in relation to the state of our mind, we would notice we have not disciplined the mind to a great extent. We have just allowed it to roam freely and become completely immersed in the distractions. We may be busy in our life, busy in order to gain some satisfaction and well-being. Those who engage in studies are doing their studies in order to secure a better life for themselves. Some are engaged in work in order to secure a good life for oneself, for one's well-being. However, while we might have been busy with those activities for our well-being, we would find that all along the way our mind has not been settled and satisfied. That is due to the fact we have let our mind be influenced by the distractions.

When we look at our state of mind we might notice for ourselves that despite all the attempts we have made, and with all we have already acquired, our mind doesn't seem to be really satisfied. It seems to just want more and more stimulation. It wants to be more and more immersed in the distractions and constantly wants to allow itself to be bombarded with different preoccupations, which doesn't contribute to the mind being settled and content. Even with all the time and energy we have spent trying to better our situation in life, the mind doesn't seem to be settled and in fact what seems to take place is that the mind just wants more and more. It is never really content. If one looks into one's life one may notice the truth of this situation.

Having already spent so much time and energy trying to gain some satisfaction and well-being, particularly in relation to our mind being happy and content, and not having achieved that goal, one would have to consider what might have been causing the mind to not be settled and content. If we pay attention we will be able to relate it to the mind being completely distracted and also to the big but unrealistic ambitions we may have.

Since that approach has not worked to make us feel content and happy, we had better look into another technique and method of trying to bring some satisfaction and contentment to the mind. So, we can consider lessening our unrealistic ambitions and trying to induce some contentment in one's mind. That can be done when we begin to withdraw our attention or preoccupation

from all the distractions. When we bring our focus within and settle down the mind that seems to make the mind become a little more content as well.

Allowing our mind to be distracted means that we are allowing our mind to be in a troubled and frustrated state. The more we allow our mind to be in that troubled state, the more the mind will naturally not be happy or peaceful. When we make the attempt to withdraw our attention from all the distractions and settle down our mind it will naturally become more subdued and less troubled.

When the meditation technique is applied appropriately the goal is to bring the mind down and make it more settled and content. However some people may relate to just having a focused mind. Recently a footballer was asked about meditation and apparently he said, 'Well, meditation seems to settle the mind when you have a focused mind'. That, course, is true. He was touching on one of the main points of meditation. Apparently engaging in meditation, keeping the mind settled and focused, had been helpful in his life! (*Geshe-la laughs*) Indeed, if we make a sincere attempt to withdraw our mind from all the preoccupations and distractions, and try to make an attempt to keep our mind focused, it definitely seems to help us.

The main purpose of the practice of meditation is to acquire the skills or techniques to protect the mind and bring about joy and happiness in the mind. That is one of the primary purposes of meditation. We need to consider the manner of protecting the mind, and what we need to protect our minds from. What causes the turmoil within us? If we pay attention to all the troubles within us we would notice the mind is influenced by the distractions of the five sense objects; beautiful sights in relation to our eye sense, beautiful taste and smell, tactile feelings and nice sound and so forth.

In relation to the five sense objects, the distractions we develop come in the form of either strong attachment or aversion to those that are not appealing. There are certain sights that are not appealing and when we see them it does not please us and we develop aversion or anger. It is the same with sound, smell and taste and tactile feelings. We might develop anger in relation the five sense objects or a sense of indifference, feeling neither attraction nor aversion towards them, just a sense of indifference. This is a state of ignorance, a state of bewilderment, neither good nor bad, just a foggy state of mind.

As we can feel attachment or anger towards each of the five sense objects there are ten ways the mind becomes agitated. If a man sees a beautiful woman, or a woman sees a beautiful man, it causes excitement and attachment to arise in the mind. Seeing a person with whom one has disagreed causes rising anger or aversion within oneself. If one checks how the troubles and disturbances arise in our mind we would see it is in relation to our mind being occupied with one of the five sense objects, experiencing either strong attachment or aversion.

We need to protect our mind from being completely immersed in and obsessed with these five sense objects. That is done when we withdraw ourselves from the obsessions of being completely influenced by the

distractions of the five senses. As we withdraw our mind from the distractions the mind naturally becomes protected from being influenced by those sense objects, and this protects us from the troubles and turmoils that arise from that. When we understand the manner of protecting one's mind in this way we will get to a certain point that is proper and correct. We get a technique that is unlike anything else.

The meditation technique involves withdrawing our mind from the distractions and placing our entire focus and attention on the chosen object of our meditation. When we engage in this technique appropriately the mind will naturally become a bit calmer and more settled because one is intentionally preventing one's mind from being influenced by the distraction. If we were to pay attention to our mind we would find that when we allow our mind to be influenced by the distractions and we immerse ourselves in any of the objects that cause excitement or anger it definitely causes the mind to be troubled.

We may be able to relate this to certain situations in our life. As soon as we think about a certain kind of situation or a certain person that one has either strong attraction or hatred towards, it immediately disturbs the mind and we feel weighed down and uncomfortable. That is what we suffer from and that is our predicament. We are constantly bombarded with different situations that weigh down the mind and make the mind feel troubled.

The best method we have to protect our mind from this troubled state is the technique of focusing on a particular object, withdrawing our mind from the distractions and placing it on the chosen object. This technique definitely temporarily helps the mind to become more settled and subdued. With familiarity the mind naturally becomes more and more settled and more protected from being influenced by the distractions.

The great Kadampa master of the past, Geshe Karapa, mentioned in one of his works that for as long as we don't understand the workings of our mind we will not be able to be settled in whatever we do. What he is saying is very true because as long as we lack knowledge of how our mind functions we won't know the causes of our troubles and turmoils. Once we know how our mind works, we will have a little more control over our mind. He further mentions that someone who does know how one's mind works can even turn unpleasant situations into favourable conditions leading onto the path.

We will now actually engage in the practice of meditation. We will reassess our physical posture. As I mention regularly, we sit in an appropriate physical posture, upright and relaxed, and the mind itself needs to be in an appropriate state. We try to induce a clear and bright state of mind and a sense of joy in one's mind. It is important to engage in the practice with a sense of joy in one's mind. So try to induce a state of mind that is fresh, clear and bright. Next, make the commitment to withdraw the mind from all external and internal distractions or preoccupations or any kind of thoughts and bring your attention and focus inwards, within you. Having brought our attention and focus inwards, the object that we choose to focus upon is our breath. By

relating to the inflow and outflow of our breath we try to bring up an image of that breath and keep our focus upon that for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

Just as we have done now, it would be beneficial to engage in a practice of meditation in our daily life. The reason we need to make an attempt to really practice meditation in our daily life is because we lack discipline in our mind. We don't have that good, positive, familiarisation in our mind and we are prone to troubles and worries, frustrations and so forth. So we need to train our mind.

4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.2. Training the mind in the stages of the path held in common with beings of the medium scope

4.2.2.1.2.2.4. Resolving the nature of the path that leads to liberation

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2. The actual resolution of the nature of the path

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2. The type of path one cultivates to overturn cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2.3. The way to train in ethics

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2.3.4. How to train in ethics

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2.3.4.1. Instructions on the four antidotes for abandoning downfalls

We are now at the outline that, 'How to train in ethics'. The first instruction in this is 'Instructions on the four antidotes for abandoning downfalls' or understanding the four causes of infraction.

The first instruction is 'not knowing the precept', which means not knowing what it is that we need to refrain from, and the moral conduct that we need to observe. If we don't know this then naturally it will be a cause for infraction. It will be a cause for us to engage in an immoral act. If we don't know the moral code then there will be nothing to prevent us from engaging in actions that would be considered immoral.

Thus the first point is that in order to protect ourselves from an infraction of the ethics we need to know the precepts and the moral code. The precept or the moral code was presented earlier and we have covered it in detail. It is summarised in adopting the ten virtues that are the opposite of the ten non-virtues or the ten negative acts. This is something that we need to get to know well. We need to know the ten non-virtues that we need to avoid and the ten virtues that we need to adopt and practice. If you practice adopting the ten virtues in your life it really seems to be one of the principle causes for a good life and well-being. It protects us from many mishaps.

The second cause for an infraction is lack of conscientiousness or carelessness. We covered a bit of this the last time. To protect ourselves from the second cause of an infraction, which is lack of conscientiousness, we need to adopt mindfulness, particularly the mindfulness of not forgetting what we need to adopt and what we need to discard. We need to be clear about what we need to adopt and is conducive for us, and what we need to discard and is harmful to ourselves. It is the mindfulness that regularly recollects or remembers this that is indicated here.

The next point in the text is to develop introspection. Introspection is a state of mind that is vigilantly checking the three doors, our actions of body, speech and mind. It is checking our body, speech and mind to see if we are engaged in virtues or non-virtues. Periodically checking our acts of body, speech and mind is referred to here as introspection.

Remembering the precepts or the moral code in relation to our body, speech and mind again refers to the ten virtues. The ten virtues are divided into three groups. Those that relate to our physical body are refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. In being mindful of our physical acts a virtuous act is an act of refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. Those virtues that relate to speech are refraining from lying, slander or divisive speech, harsh words and idle gossip. Those virtues that relate to the mind are refraining from covetousness, harmful intent and wrong or perverted views.

Being mindful is remembering those three levels whereas the function of introspection is to periodically check whether we are engaging in appropriate physical actions or not, whether we are engaging in appropriate speech or not and likewise with our thoughts. We periodically check what kind of thoughts are going through our mind, what kind of speech we are uttering, what kind of physical actions we are adopting. That checking up process is done by introspection. When we adopt this as a discipline in our life, we find that, even in one day, it can be a means to protect us from mishaps and misdeeds, and is a very good discipline in our life.

Adopting and utilising these two tools, mindfulness and introspection, becomes a supreme means of protecting one from troubles and particularly protecting a sense of joy and happiness within oneself. We all naturally have a sense of joy and happiness. It is an inborn quality, but a problem comes about when we are not able to protect it. When we are not able to protect our sense of joy and happiness we fall victim to other negative states of mind and that disturbs us.

First of all we need to acknowledge that we have this inborn natural quality of happiness and joy. Likewise we need to acknowledge the positive quality of love and compassion is also a natural inborn quality that we have always carried within us. Again a problem arises when we are not able to protect that. Initially we engage in a relationship because of the sense of love and compassion that we have for the other. To a certain extent, we do have that. But then when the relationship becomes a little bit sour, and if we have not been able to protect our love and compassion for the other, then problems start to arise. It is very important that we recognise that a sense of happiness and joy and the qualities of love and compassion are an inborn, natural quality that we have always had.

Now the question is how to protect these things. That is what we need to learn. We also need to learn what causes that sense of love and compassion and that sense of joy and happiness to decline within oneself. It is when we lack mindfulness and introspection that we begin to lose the strength of that sense of joy and happiness, and love

and compassion begins to diminish. Applying mindfulness and introspection in our life is a means to help protect those qualities within oneself.

It is definitely the case that when we have forgotten the virtuous states of mind, and our intention is to familiarise ourselves with non-virtuous states of mind, then we start to face problems in life.

When we look into the factors or the conditions that contribute to our well-being we find, as I regularly emphasise, that there are two factors; well-being on the physical level and well-being on the mental level. The physical level means having good health and we try to protect our health. Mental well-being involves protecting the positive qualities and states of mind within us. That summarises the most essential things we need to have a fulfilled life. We would say we have a fulfilled, happy life when we have physical and mental well-being.

In relation to mental well-being, I stress that the positive qualities, primarily love and compassion are priceless. Love and compassion and sense of joy are a priceless attribute because there is nothing that can surpass the qualities of love and compassion. They are priceless and nothing surpasses them because they lead to the ultimate benefit for those who believe in a future life. But even in this life, regardless whether one believes in a future life or not, what brings about the greatest benefits for oneself are the qualities of love and compassion.

This starts in our own relationships with others, with our partner and so forth. As I stress very clearly, if we lose that sense of love and compassion in relation to our partners and other relatives and so forth then we start to have problems. That is what brings about the suffering of loneliness. The main cause for loneliness is losing the sense of love and compassion. If we have worked towards maintaining a sense of love and compassion within ourselves there is no need to fear the danger of loneliness. We will always be with companions and friends and so forth because the natural quality of love and compassion is something that naturally attracts others. That is how to training our mind to develop these qualities contributes to our well-being. It is important that we take this into consideration.

The importance of these two tools, mindfulness and introspection, is that they protect us from mishaps and troubles and guard the positive qualities within ourselves. To emphasise the importance of this the great Master Shantideva in his great work, *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, says in one verse,

*O you who wish to guard your minds,
I beseech you with folded hands:
Always exert yourselves to guard,
Mindfulness and introspection.*

That is the extent to which the great master Shantideva emphasises the importance of these two tools. When he says, 'I place my palms together and plead with you to adopt this', he is emphasising how essential these two tools are for our development, for the betterment of our life and for our well-being. Out of compassion he is pleading with us to cultivate and develop these within ourselves. When we think about it, it normally will be the

other way round. We should be pleading and making requests to the great masters for inspiration and so forth. But a great master here is actually pleading with us to develop the positive qualities within ourselves. These are just the main points in regard to mindfulness and introspection.

Following mindfulness and introspection, the third instruction says that we need to cultivate the states of mind of self-respect and what is sometimes translated as shame, but which may be more appropriately translated as self-respect. Self-respect is a sense of personal responsibility for refraining from engaging in negative deeds and consideration for others is a state of mind that we develop in avoiding negative deeds in consideration for others. These two states of mind are mentioned as being essential in order to protect us from infractions. Self-respect uses oneself as a reason because of one's personal reasons to avoid negativity.

The difference between the two is that for the first, self-respect, the direct translation is shame and for the second the translation is embarrassment. If we were to use those two words then what it actually implies is, as mentioned previously, that 'shame', is in relation to one's personal reason for avoiding any misdeeds, and 'embarrassment' is in relation to others as a reason to refrain from misdeeds.

If one is abiding by, or has faith in, a particular religion then it will have its own ethical codes that it requires you to observe and keep. When one has taken a particular precept, maybe a certain vow, if one were to be in a situation where there is danger of breaking that vow, or if one is inclined to be influenced to break that vow, one can immediately remember, 'Oh, I shouldn't be engaging in this act because that will be breaking a precept. I will be going against a moral, ethical vow that I have taken.' Remembering the vow that one has taken, becomes a reason to avoid engaging in a misdeed. That is referred to as shame in the translation. Embarrassment would be where one thinks about the other.

Where one receives the precepts from another, committing a misdeed would be displeasing and disloyal to the preceptor, whoever one has taken the precept from, because one has made a promise to them. In the Buddhist tradition if one has taken a precept from a preceptor such as an abbot, then disappointing or displeasing them would be what is called 'embarrassment' here.

The main point is that when it is in relation to thinking about one's own dignity avoiding a misdeed is referred to as 'shame' and when is thinking about how it affects others, like a promise one made to others to avoid a misdeed, then it is 'embarrassment'. These become tools for one to avoid engaging in misdeeds. The main point is to avoid engaging in misdeeds. When we have these considerations, these attitudes, in our mind they will definitely help us to avoid engaging in misdeeds and protect us from mishaps or dangerous situations.

It is explained in the text that when the object or the source where one has taken the vows or precepts is a particularly significant or holy object that one has great respect for, it is more likely that one would be inclined to observe one's precepts and vows. For example, if those

who believe in a creator God that is supreme, an ultimate being, then they have ultimate respect and reverence towards that being. So when one makes a promise in God's name not to do something then, that great respect and strong faith in a God helps such a person to observe their promise. If one has made a promise to God not to do something then it becomes a very grave situation. Because of what God stands for one dare not go against the will of God or disobey God. That becomes a very significant way to protect oneself from misdeeds and mishaps. Similarly, we can relate that to other instance where we take precepts from someone we respect it becomes much more likely that we are inclined to keep those promises or precepts.

This also indicates the importance of having strong faith. If one develops strong faith towards a being in whom one has total conviction because they are infallible, or the truth, and one knows that they will not deceive us and what they proclaim is only to our benefit then one is inclined to observe the ethical or moral codes that are laid down by that being.

We will end the teaching session for this evening here. Before it concludes we will again engage in a few minutes of meditation and this time the object that we focus on will be the sound of the mantra being recited. The mantra is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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