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answer to oneself may be a 'no'. One has not actually achieved a genuinely peaceful state of mind yet. This is where the training that we are talking about now is still required. We need do further training, specifically with regard to bringing about genuine calmness and happiness within our mind.

So, the main point is not that we have not studied and gained knowledge so far in life, we have gained a great amount of knowledge, but we now need to train in something that genuinely contributes to our mental calmness and happiness. That is something that we still need further training in. If we can add mental training to the knowledge we have already obtained so far in life, then that combination will definitely contribute to our overall wellbeing.

At this point we may ask the question, "How do we go about training our mind. What does the training involve?" The answer to that is we need to learn how to reverse our focus and attention upon negativity, whereby it leads us into adverse situations. We need to reverse that kind of focus and apply our attention to something that is positive. So we need to engage in a training that allows us to switch our attention and focus from negativities or adverse conditions to positive ones.

When one's attention or focus is given to an adverse or faulty object it naturally causes the mind to become excited and leads to anxieties, turmoil and a chaotic state of mind. That is the natural outcome of focusing on an adverse object. Whereas by focusing on a pure or positive object the mind naturally becomes settled down and calm.

Therefore the training involves intentionally withdrawing the focus or the attention of our mind away from faulty or negative objects and intentionally placing it on positive objects. This process itself is what is called the meditation technique and, of course, from the Buddhist point of view this is what we call the actual practice of Dharma. So this is the technique and that's what it involves.

By repeatedly applying this technique of focusing on a positive object — an object that by its very nature does not cause delusions to rise — we will familiarise our mind with that object and eventually be able to achieve a state of mind that is called a serviceable state of mind. A serviceable state of mind implies a mind that we can use to focus on a virtuous or positive object for as long as we wish. That serviceability is a state of mind that has overcome the natural defects of the mind which causes very distracted and chaotic states of mind. When those defects are overcome through focusing on a virtuous object the mind then becomes serviceable.

Then, as a result of obtaining that serviceability, the mind begins to experience a certain amount of bliss. Firstly one obtains what is called mental pliancy. Having achieved mental pliancy one experiences a mental bliss. That mental bliss then induces a physical serviceability and having achieved that physical serviceability will mean that one has obtained physical pliancy. So the mental pliancy induces a physical pliancy. Then, when one achieves physical pliancy one experiences a physical bliss and that induces a mental bliss as well.

So through consistent acquaintance with this practice of focusing on a virtuous object one can achieve the combination of physical and mental pliancy with mental and physical bliss. When this occurs it is said that one has obtained the optimum state of single pointed concentration that is called calm abiding or mental quiescence. When one obtains the state of calm abiding there is no effort whatsoever when one goes into meditation. Only bliss is experienced. It is an effortless state of being able to focus on an object for as long as one wishes. This is the ultimate result of practicing single pointed concentration.

With the remaining time we have for our session let us spend a few minutes in meditation. I meant to explain a bit about the physical posture for meditation but maybe we can go over that in our next session. For now adopt a comfortable, relaxed posture. Then try to adopt a relaxed state of mind where you muster up some sort of clarity rather than dullness. Try to have a clear and bright state of mind.

The object of our meditation now is to focus on our breath. First we withdraw our attention and focus from all other thoughts, forms and objects. We completely withdraw from all of that. We need to make a commitment that we will completely withdraw from all other objects of focus. In that way we bring the focus of our mind inwards, within us.

Having withdrawn our attention and focus from all other objects, we bring our full attention and awareness within ourselves and then place our focus upon our own breath. Our physical breathing needs to be natural and free from labour and free from sound. We place our full attention on our natural inhalation and exhalation. Whilst focusing on the breath our mind needs to be bright and clear, so from the very onset try to not allow a dull state of mind to settle. When we are able to focus on the breath in a clear and bright state of mind, the essential features of the meditation technique are intact and that will suffice for a proper meditation, even in a few minutes. It is in this way that we will spend the next few minutes in meditation. (*Pause for meditation.*)

Just as we have attempted in our short session now, it would be really worthwhile to adopt a regular meditation practice in one's daily life. When we engage in a consistent practice that is when we begin to see positive results. Particularly for beginners, it is really important to ensure that right from the start one adopts the proper technique. Once one adopts a certain technique of meditation, that is what one acquaints oneself with. Thus, if that technique is not quite right, it can be really hard to correct the meditation technique later. So it is really important to try to adopt a proper technique from the start.

Training in focusing one's mind gives one the benefits of being able to focus properly. Beyond the spiritual context, even in one's normal life and everyday work situations it seems that there is definitely a positive outcome from that ability to focus well. From our own experience in whatever work we may be engaged in we know that the moment our mind becomes scattered and we are not really focused and paying attention to the task at hand,

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we will start making mistakes and whatever we are doing doesn't come out very well. If we are able to focus well and pay attention to what we are doing the outcome is much better. There have been many people who have confided in me that if they begin the day with a short meditation it seems to really contribute to a better day at work and in relationships with others and so forth. There definitely has been a positive outcome.

Training to be able to focus well is not reserved for adults. If a child is exposed to games that enable the child to focus well, that seems to be really useful. In fact that is very important. Of course it is not a form of meditation, but some parents have told me that certain games are good because they allow the child to focus well. If a game helps a child to focus on that task for a certain period of time, and in fact I have noticed they can focus very well on what they are doing for as long as half an hour, that can be very helpful and useful. For example, apparently putting different pieces together also seems to be very good [*Geshe-la chuckles*]

We have a young adult here, Chonyi, who used to play with Lego when he was child. He might be benefiting now from that focus he learnt when he was young. He is actually quite skilled now in being able to do meticulous things with his hands. He is able to use his hands and focus well on what he is doing, probably because of playing with Lego earlier on.

Then there are other games where you have to put numbers together, or maybe puzzles. They seem to be really helpful because when a child is given that task they become quite fascinated and it becomes a challenge for them to try to put it together. They have to focus to put these numbers or pieces in their appropriate places. Sometimes I see their mothers try to help. If I am well acquainted to them, I would advise them, 'No, leave the child alone. They might just be able to do it themselves.' When they are given a task and it becomes a challenge for them, it seems to be really helpful.

With the short time remaining we might have a question. Does anyone, have a good question?

*Question:* Geshe-la talked about destructive states of mind and I think I have heard that there are five. I am wondering if there is a main destructive state of mind which is the worst?

*Answer:* From the Buddhist point of view it comes down to one particular destructive state of mind from which many other negative states of mind arise. That one destructive mind that is a basis for many others is called 'grasping at a self', which implies grasping to a false self. From that initial destructive mind of grasping at a false self, many other emotions or negative states of mind such as anger, attachment, jealousy and so forth arise. If you were to think about those five that you mentioned, these might have been mostly what we call the auxiliary or the branch negativities and delusions, such as anger, jealousy, pride and so forth. However the faulty state of mind that grasps to a truly existent self, is the primary negative or faulty state of mind that causes all of the rest to arise.

It takes time to really understand what grasping at a truly existent self actually means. However on an experiential level, grasping at a truly existent self initiates a strong sense of self-centeredness which strongly clings to 'me', 'I', or my individual interests, focusing merely on one's own wellbeing. Even though the grasping to 'me', or 'I', is not actually what is called grasping to a truly existent self in itself, it is, however, induced by that. From that grasping or strong clinging to, for example, 'me' or 'I', one's entire focus becomes centred on the wellbeing of me. Then, due to the strong attachment or grasping at the self and one's own wellbeing one develops anger towards anything that opposes one's wellbeing, and attachment to anything that seems conducive. That causes aversion to some beings and strong attachment to others. This all happens naturally in relation to that sense of 'me', 'I', and the entire focus on the 'I'. According to the Buddhist teachings the antidote to overcome this grasping at the self is the understanding and final realisation of selflessness or emptiness.

This change of attitude from focusing merely on oneself to focusing on others doesn't, of course, come about immediately. We cannot expect that change of attitude to happen overnight, but nevertheless through persistent training of the mind and slowly changing our attitudes it will gradually be possible to focus on others wellbeing more than one's own.

*Question:* Geshe-la, you explained the importance of practising love and compassion however I have experienced a set back by giving others too much. When they begin to take my love and concern for granted, I begin to feel used and taken advantage of. So, I start to feel that I need to focus on myself and take care of my own needs. What is Geshe-la's comment on this?

*Answer:* Unfortunately that does happen. However that would, of course, not be a fault on the side of the giver as much as it is the fault of the other who is not content and just wants more and more. We may see this as being taken advantage of. The other may not be intentionally thinking that they want to take advantage of you but they are just not content and they need more and more. You can never satiate them with what you give. However, from one's own side I think there is also that skilful means of giving to benefit the other rather than to harm the other. That sort of initiative, of course, needs to be taken. I know of one family who would told me that even though they had bought their relatives a house and given them things they were still not happy and kept asking for more. This situation can, of course, occur. 'We need more money!'

A very wealthy family with three children told me of their experience. Their middle daughter married and they bought her a house and provided her with good conditions but apparently she wanted even more money. It was not as if she didn't have enough but she just wanted more. Her mother was a bit frustrated and asked my opinion as to what she should do. This is a situation where you cannot satisfy the other's needs and that is, of course, something that one needs to take into consideration. One need to consider if one's giving is to help the other when the other is deprived of something,

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or the other wants more of something they are not deprived of. When one knows the other has what they need, one is not helping them any further by giving. That's what one needs to take into consideration. The boundaries may have to be placed there.

Of course the genuine attitude of helping others is definitely very good. Generosity is a very, very good thing to engage in because someone who is genuinely generous is a much happier person. I notice that there are individuals who are quite wealthy and then reach a point in their life where they feel, 'I have acquired sufficient for myself. Now it is time to help others, to share what I have with others.'

Those who have that generous mind of wanting to help others, who feel that they are content and have enough for themselves and thus wish to share their wealth with others, is very good. That is a good attitude to have. Conversely someone who doesn't feel that they have enough and wants more and more, no matter how rich they may be, are not really in a happy state of mind because no matter how much they have they feel that they are deprived. They still don't have enough. That is not a happy state of mind. Whereas when one gives and shares with others it brings about genuine happiness within oneself. We might all have experienced the joy of giving. When someone receives what we give we feel happy about that. That is something we might have experienced.

I recall that last year in a TV show there was someone who was very rich and they were asking a question about taxation. I didn't understand the complete question but I gathered they were asking him about that. The question was mainly about high taxes. This individual was saying, 'Oh, it is good that the taxes are a bit higher because it will help the country. It will benefit the nation.' When I understood that was the answer I felt that was very good, I felt great. I felt it was remarkable that this person was genuinely making comments about how it will benefit the nation and many people when the taxes were put up.

*Question:* Geshe-la mentioned that the four elements need to be in harmony for physical wellbeing; I am wondering if there could be a danger for the wind element to be out of balance during meditation? What can one do to overcome such a problem?

*Answer:* There are specific instructions in the teachings that when there is a chance of the wind element increasing out of proportion, it can be quite dangerous. Psychologically it can cause some problems. In the technique of achieving calm abiding there are nine stages of concentration. Someone who has reached the sixth or seventh of these nine stages is said to be at a point where there is danger of the wind element increasing quite strongly. So, at that stage, the meditator has to relax a bit and calm down so that it doesn't overpower the mind. The wind element increasing too severely can affect the mind to the extent that one starts to hallucinate.

Apparently there was once a meditator whose mind started playing tricks and he started to think that there was a pot on his lap. The meditation instructor told that individual, 'Okay, next time there is a pot on your lap, take a piece of chalk and make a cross on the pot

[laughter].' Later, after he came out of meditation, he noticed that he had made an X on his stomach [laughter].

Before we end the session for the evening, let us again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object that we will focus on is the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. As we hear the sound of the mantra, we place our full attention and focus on the sound itself and when the mantra recitation subsides we try to meditate on that vacuity of sound and just keep our mind in that vacuity or empty space for a moment

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo  
Edit 1 by John Burch and Magnolia Flora  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
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