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are in our everyday normal life that few minutes will enhance our ability to do this the self-analysis or self-investigation. If we have the awareness or mindfulness of this self-investigation at our disposal we will have a tool to protect ourselves in any situation that we find ourselves in. As soon as a situation arises, even if we are not in formal meditation, our familiarity with meditation will enable us right away to genuinely accept the situation, one's own thought and how one reacts to that. We will know what our mind is focused on, what is driving our attitude and the decisions that we are making. Is it based on some truth and reality? If it based on a positive attitude then one can feel happy and joyful about that and think, 'Okay, I have made good choices. I have made choices by using my best judgement. I have done what is necessary and can rejoice about the fact of having analysed the situation and done something positive.'

We will notice if we are giving in to irrational and negative states of mind which if pursued will cause us or others more turmoil. If we don't have the habit of analysing our own state of mind we might just blindly follow whatever comes up in our mind. But, having analysed and assessed the situation oneself one will not allow oneself to follow that path of negativity.

In our normal, everyday life, it is good to assess our state of mind. Does it have good, positive thoughts or a tendency to become completely distracted and follow negative thoughts? If one finds that one is in states of mind that are completely dispersed and distracted by negative influences then one needs to caution oneself, 'If I follow this it will be harmful to me and to others, so I must overcome this.' It is in this way that even when one is not in formal meditation one will be able to reap the benefits of the practice of self-analysis. This is the way to go about.

It will be good for you to keep in mind the practical benefit of applying self-analysis in your everyday life and see this approach as important in your life. The reality is that even for someone who is regularly meditating, the duration of his or her formal meditation might be very short. They may have a busy life with work and so forth. To limit training our mind only to a meditation session would be unrealistic. To think that that a short meditation of a few minutes on a daily basis would fix the problems in one's life would be very unrealistic. It is much more practical and realistic to take this practice of self-analysis out of the formal meditation session because most of our time will be spent out of formal meditation.

So we need to find ways and techniques to help us. While the meditation technique provides a means for us to obtain a good result during that short period, how do we apply a technique that will help us on a daily basis when we are out and about doing our normal job and work? We need to apply that self-analysis. If we do not do that self-analysis and let whatever emotion or thought that arises in our mind completely dominate us we will fall victims to negative emotions such as anger.

We can see from our own past experience that when we are dominated by anger the outcome of any decisions we make or actions we take are not good. There is never a

good outcome, or a positive result. So, remembering these previous situations, when anger arises now we immediately try to remind ourselves that if we were to allow ourselves to engage in that emotion and follow the decisions made out of intense anger the result will be disastrous for oneself and others. There are other negative states of mind such as jealousy, pride and attachment and so forth. As these arise we immediately recognise them for what they are and try to remind ourselves not to follow them or reprimand ourselves if we find we are being influenced by them.

When we apply this self-analysis we will begin to notice that where previously when intense anger arose in our mind we might not have thought twice about it and just made decisions and reacted impulsively that now, having done that self-analysis coupled with regular short meditation, intense anger starts to decrease a bit and eventually even though anger might still arise it doesn't really hurt us. We don't feel the pain and angst of anger because we have learned to defuse the intensity of anger.

It is the same with jealousy. Normally when we have a very jealous mind we feel the pangs of that jealousy. It is actually very painful and hurtful to our own mind. Through the practice of self-analysis we will begin to slowly decrease and defuse that intense jealousy inside of us. We need to remind ourselves this practice requires consistency and slowly and gradually we will reap the benefit. We cannot expect an immediate transformation or change (*Geshe-la chuckles*.) If anger were to lessen and we don't experience the pangs of anger, jealousy and the like that would be wonderful. That is the best gift to oneself. That would be a wondrous thing to achieve, wouldn't it? So this is something worthwhile for us to invest our time and energy in.

If we were to use this technique of self-analysis and investigation within our mind we will find that it makes great sense. It makes total sense because it is a technique for identifying the real troublemaker within us. In the process of identifying those states of mind that cause us turmoil, such as intense anger, jealousy and the like, we also find ways to overcome the overpowering dominance of these negative states of mind. Identifying a troublemaker for what it is already helps to diffuse it. That recognition in itself helps to diffuse its intensity and then slowly and gradually we work on that issue further.

The process is, first of all, identifying and evaluating the negative states of mind within us and constantly thinking about the negative consequences of allowing ourselves to be under the dominance and control of these states of mind. If we were to give in to anger the practical disadvantages are that when one is in an intensely angry state of mind everything we do is joyless. We don't experience joy in eating, no matter what kind of food we may be having. Our tastebuds don't function properly when we are under the dominance of intense anger. It is the same with sleep. We all know that when we are really agitated and troubled by anger we don't sleep well. So we lose our sleep. Whoever we associate with, even good friends, don't bring joy to our mind anymore. Places that we normally find beautiful and tranquil will suddenly not appear to be very tranquil and pleasant. So whatever

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we do, wherever we go, whoever we associate with, it will not be joyful. This is because our mind is being dominated by intense anger.

It is in these practical ways that we need to acknowledge and identify the real troublemakers within us and apply the antidote to overcome them. It is also in this way that we can see the practical benefits of the practice of meditation. It is a technique to bring our attention away from the focus of that anger. We will also begin to acknowledge that we need to find ways and means to protect ourselves from what is causing us anger. 'How do I protect myself; how do I protect my mind?' When one begins to see the urgency to protect one's mind then meditation practice will make sense. It is focusing on the virtuous or neutral object that allows one to divert oneself from that object of anger. So, it is in this way that we can see the benefit of meditation.

Having shared the practical benefits of meditation and the ways of applying this training in analysis and investigation we now come to a summary relating to ourselves. Individually we might have come to a point where we agree that this will be a good investment and good training. Then we might wonder whether we have the potential to do this. 'Do I have the potential?' We can safely assume that each and every one of us has, by virtue of having a clear and intelligent mind, this potential. I know that you have all done a significant amount of study and training in your life and you have already applied your intelligence in your life so far. None of us here are deprived of an intelligent mind and common sense. We are not deprived of that.

The next question may be whether one has time. As I regularly share, the formal meditation practice might require only a few minutes but the process of investigation is something we can do throughout the day at any time when we are by ourselves. So there is no question of not having the time. We will all have the time to do it.

The next question may be, 'Can I afford it? Will it be expensive?' (*Laughter*) There are many other kinds of training that apparently cost thousands of dollars. However this practice is completely free. You do it in your own time by yourself and you don't have to pay anyone a cent. It is completely free and you don't have to worry about whether you can afford it or not. It is affordable.

So, we have the potential, we have the time and we can afford it. Then why not apply this technique? If we see the practical benefit of this practice why not apply it in your life as it would be of benefit to you. Why allow yourself to be traumatised by your own negative states of mind, month after month, year after year, feeling like a victim of one's negative attitudes and states of mind. This has never given us any redeeming values or profit in our life. What use is it to be in that depressed or traumatised state of mind? Why put yourself through that constantly if there is a way out of it? These are significant points to consider in encouraging oneself to apply the technique.

The only reason that I remind you of these points again and again is that they might be of some help and benefit to you. I have no other agenda. I have no other reason to

share this with you other than it might be of some use for you. When I see the situations of many people I find that they are putting themselves through unnecessary turmoil and suffering. When I see that or when I hear you talking about your life situation it gives me some pain because I feel that if you could just change your attitude and way of looking at things a bit and apply this very practical technique things could be much better. Things don't have to be as complicated as they seem. It is just a matter of shifting one's focus and one's attitude. That is all it takes. It is because of these concerns that I talk to you again and again about these points.

Having explained the benefits of the practice we can now spend some time in formal meditation. For that purpose let us again sit in an upright, relaxed posture. To apply the meditation technique to reap the most benefit we need to be very clear from the very start as to why we are doing this practice. Sitting in a comfortable, relaxed posture is the first step. Then we check our mindset to make sure that we have a good intention and that one is not doing this practice for frivolous reasons. Our purpose should be to gain some real transformation within us. We need the best possible motivation in our mind.

The practice of meditation requires, like everything else in life, some discipline and commitment. The discipline that we need to apply here is intentionally withdrawing our focus and attention from all other objects, whether they be external objects or our thoughts regardless of whether they are positive or negative thoughts. Even positive thoughts can sometimes distract us and eventually influence us in a negative way. Not to mention the effects of negative thoughts. Therefore, temporarily for the purpose of meditation, we need to withdraw from all other forms of objects that we would normally be completely immersed in and focusing on. We intentionally tell ourselves that, 'I am not going to allow my mind to be influenced by other thoughts, imaginings and so forth.' and completely withdraw our mind, bringing it within and keep the mind focused within. Then, having brought our focus within ourselves, we apply that full attention and focus to the chosen object of meditation, which is our own breath. This means that our commitment for the next few minutes is, 'I will not allow my mind to be distracted with other thoughts and so forth and place my entire focus and attention single-pointedly on the breath itself.' We mentally observe our natural in breath and out breath and completely maintain that single-pointed focus on the breath. We will apply this technique for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

With the limited time that we have left we might address some questions. If you have a good question raise your hand.

*Question:* Geshe-la can you please explain the meaning of Sanskrit title *Bodhisattvacharyavataṛa*?

*Answer:* The first word, *bodhi*, means buddha and refers to enlightenment. The Sanskrit word *bodhi*, when it applies to enlightenment describes the state of enlightenment where all the negativities or faults have been completely eradicated and all positive, good qualities been completely actualised. The Tibetan words for this, *jang*

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*chub*, has that connotation. *Chang* denotes purifying and eradicating all defilements and *chub* indicates having acquired or established all good qualities.

The second word of the title is *sattva*, which literally means mind. In this case it means the mind that aspires to enlightenment, the mind of awakening.

Combining these two words, *bodhi* and *sattva*, a bodhisattva is an individual being who is totally dedicated to doing whatever it takes to achieve the state of enlightenment. They develop a courageous mind that aspires to achieve the state of enlightenment to help all beings to be free from suffering and to lead them to the ultimate state endowed with happiness. An individual being who has developed that state of mind would be called a 'bodhisattva' or a 'noble being'.

Next is *charyavatara*, which is two words, *charya* and *avatara*. *Charya* means action, implying the actions that noble being will undertake to achieve enlightenment. The actions or deeds that need to be undertaken in order to achieve enlightenment are, in brief, the six perfections, generosity and so forth. *Avatara* means an introduction or 'that which shows these deeds'.

So, in short, the title means that it is an introduction to the deeds or actions of the noble being, the bodhisattva, who is inspired to achieve enlightenment. Thus the contents of this text, *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* describes these deeds in detail.

Thanks for that question. It was a very good, very significant, question. Even asking about the title reminds me again of the noble being, the bodhisattva, and just hearing about a bodhisattva really inspires me (*Geshe-la chuckles*). Just to get an understanding of the title of the text and how you pronounce it can bring very deep meaning. Therefore it is really worthwhile to have a good understanding of it and to be reminded of it. Thank you again for that question. Maybe one more last question.

*Question:* I have heard that if you break any commitments that you have made when taking refuge and so forth, it has grave negative consequences, so would it be better not make any commitments?

*Answer:* I don't blame you for asking that question as there are many who feel it might better not to get into something before fully understanding it. There are certain practices, like initiations and so forth, where not all the commitments are allowed to be presented prior to taking the vows.

We were talking about bodhisattvas earlier and there are bodhisattva vows. These vows need to be explained and one needs to understand what they imply and the commitments before taking the vows. If one has that understanding then one can make a better choice. However it is not permitted to explain all of the self-liberation vows, the novice and full ordination vows, prior to taking them. That has its own purpose and reasons as well. It is also not allowed to completely mention all the commitments in detail prior to taking certain tantric vows. One takes these commitments based on having some prior understanding. .

So, practically, I feel it is best to take small steps to do whatever one can, whatever one is comfortable with.

Then, as one understands certain things and one feels ready for it one can make commitments. Of course the very purpose of making the commitment is so that one can be consistent in doing the practice. That is the whole purpose, it is not to scare people. The whole point is to be consistent in one's practice. There is actually a saying in our tradition that making commitments might not be too difficult but actually practicing them would be something of a challenge. That seems to be true. So, following that saying, it is maybe wiser to not readily make commitments prior to understanding a bit more and having a good basis.

Before we conclude the session for this evening let us spend a few moments in meditation. This time the object of our focus will be the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. As we hear the sound we just try to maintain our full attention and focus on the sound itself and when the recitation ceases we try to meditate on the residue of the sound and the empty vacuity of the space of that sound and maintain that for a few moments before we come out of the meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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