



Having first developed our inner wisdom through self-analysis, we will then be able to use it in relation to external circumstances and check whether something will be beneficial or not for ourselves. For example, when others give us suggestions or advice, we will be able to assess the information and distinguish whether it is useful or beneficial for us. If we are able to assess what others say, by weighing up whether it is valuable or credible, we will not be gullible or blindly follow what others tell us. Often we are misled and deceived by others because of our naivety, we just easily believe what they say—when this happens, we have not used our own intelligence and wisdom. The main point though is that our inner wisdom does increase; the more we use our wisdom through analysis and checking, the further it will develop, strengthen and help us make proper decisions in our lives. The benefit of developing and using our internal wisdom is something we can experience in our lives now and in our everyday situations. Of course, many of us here have the inclination to use our wisdom to strive towards a better future life, liberation or enlightenment, but if we fail to get the meditation techniques in place initially, then, we will not even be able to accomplish something that is beneficial for us right now. However, if we use our wisdom and intelligence in its proper way, we will definitely derive the benefits immediately, and our inner wisdom will certainly be a tool for our future lives and aims too. Whatever our future goals may be, they will naturally occur when our present lives are meaningful and improve. These are really important points. I see them as being important and useful, so I share them with you, and try to remind you of them again and again. I don't know whether you find them useful or not [*Geshe-la laughs*], but at least I've attempted to share something with you that I find beneficial in my life.

If you agree with the information I have shared with you and think there is some value in it, then, you might want to take it to heart and try to implement it. If, however, you feel that the information does not make much sense or you don't agree with it, then, I have to apologise and you can leave it aside.

It seems that if you apologise, then whatever confrontations you may have had with others can settle down. Even if you say something wrong or disagreeable, when you say sorry, the dispute or conflict seems to ease. This seems to be the case even after many years of confrontation – if an apology is made then the behaviour seems to be more easily excused and forgiven. So that is why I apologise.

A contemporary example of this is that many Indigenous Australians held on bitterly to the mistreatment that had occurred to their ancestors many years before, sometimes a couple of centuries ago. Holding on to that bitterness was a real pain in their heart for a long time. When, however, Kevin Rudd finally stood up as Prime Minister and apologised officially for the past mistreatment, it seemed to appease the suffering of many Aboriginals; many cried with joy. So, the official apology seems to have helped relieve the distress that was felt.

From this example, we can see there is a virtue in apologising. When you apologise, it helps to settle the

minds of those who would otherwise not really like you or who disagree with you.

As we can see, there is a virtue in apologising, which we need to try to bring into our home. There are times where we may have said or done things which family members felt were inappropriate or that they disagreed with and so forth, and it would be good to occasionally apologise for that.

Even a small gesture, such as apologising, when one has done something inappropriate or upset another will be in line with what we call Dharma practice. When we think about it Dharma practice—in Buddhist terms, spiritual practice—need not be something that is really grand. In order to actually apply the Dharma practice at our own level, we need to begin with doing the small good things and virtues that we can manage. Then that accumulates and is the measure of how we are leading a real Dharma or spiritual life.

I can recall His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioning that several years ago on a trip to Europe, there were people who, for some reason, were demonstrating against the Dalai Lama, holding placards and banners. They were out there as a protest. But the Dalai Lama said that when he approached the venue, he turned around to them and put his palms together and bowed down and smiled at them. And in response they also started to bow down and smile. [*laughter*] His Holiness said that those protesters who were supposed to be protesting against him actually started smiling and bowing down too. [*laughter*]

When we actually think about the situation, they of course were out there protesting with the intention of doing something that the Dalai Lama would take notice of and be upset about. But when the Dalai Lama was not upset and he greeted them with a joyful smile, they were perhaps taken aback. That genuine smile and appealing gesture of the Dalai Lama affected them so that they had to respond in a positive way themselves, too.

Their purpose for protesting was to upset the Dalai Lama, but rather than being upset the Dalai Lama showed a genuine smile and joyfulness. That would be a very strong message for them. They would have to realise themselves "What we are doing is pointless". [*Geshe-la laughs*] "What we came out here for, which is to protest against the Dalai Lama, has no point at all. There is no point in doing it as we are not able to upset the Dalai Lama anyway."

Having explained the benefits of meditation we can now actually try to apply it in a few minutes of practice now. Again we remind ourselves to sit in a comfortable, relaxed but upright, position. The best preparation for meditation is to have a clear mind and positive state of mind, which is what we call generating a positive motivation for the practice of meditation. That is really important.

As mentioned previously, the meditation technique involves intentionally withdrawing from focusing on any forms of deluded distractions, which we call deluded objects that otherwise come to mind. Then we place our focus on our own breath. Thus our breath is the object for

our meditation. In order for the meditation practice to be meaningful, and to actually derive some real benefit from it, we need to place our full attention and focus just on the breath and nothing else wholeheartedly and sincerely, even if just for a few minutes. With this 100% focus on the breath way we will spend the next few minutes in meditation.

[Pause for breathing meditation.]

That will be sufficient for now.

#### 4.2.2.1.2.3. The way to train the mind in the stages of the path of beings of the great scope

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2. The actual paths

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2. How to develop an awakening mind

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1. The stages of training the awakening mind

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1. Training the mind in the pith instructions on the six causes and effect, which comes from the lineage traced to the great master Atisha

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2. Extensive explanation

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2. The actual training in the stages

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1. Training the mind to strive for the welfare of others

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2. The actual development of the mind that strives for others' welfare

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2.1. Cultivating loving kindness

The topic from the text by Lama Tsong Khapa that we are studying by is Cultivating Loving Kindness—what Buddhists call love. Earlier, the focus or object of love was explained, then the subject of love, and now we have come to the subdivision explaining the benefits of cultivating loving kindness.

3. Lama Tsong Khapa explains that **cultivating love** has far greater merit than continually making vast offerings to the highest recipients, which are the buddhas or the enlightened beings. He explains that you accumulate much greater merit by cultivating loving kindness than by making immense offerings to the object of refuge such as the Buddha. The text, therefore, outlines the benefits of cultivating loving kindness as being vast because the merit accumulated from generating love is even greater than presenting extensive offerings to the Buddha.

To back up this point, Lama Tsong Khapa cites from Sutra called the *King of Concentrations*, which is the Buddha's own words:

Always offering to superior beings  
As many countless offerings  
As there are in billions of lands does not equal  
A portion of the benefit of a loving attitude.

This profound advice is directly from the Buddha himself. The Buddha is exhorting his disciples not to continuously make countless offerings to him, but to develop loving kindness towards other living beings instead, because it is much more meritorious and produces much greater benefits. This attitude surpasses the norm. We rarely find someone who says, "Don't pay respect to me, but rather to others." So, it clear that the Buddha's intention is based on the utmost humility and compassion.

The Buddha's profound advice shows the unconditional love he has for all living beings. To exhort others to

develop love for sentient beings is showing the Buddha's own unconditional and limitless love towards all beings. So this is something that we can clearly detect from his advice. When we think about it, the Buddha's unconditional love, which is vast and limitless because it is extended towards all living beings indiscriminately, and which has reached its most perfect state in the Buddha, did not come about without any causes and conditions. It is not as if suddenly and miraculously the Buddha found boundless love in his heart. It didn't come about just overnight. Rather he had trained his mind in developing love and compassion over many lifetimes prior to becoming enlightened. When he was an ordinary being like ourselves he was acquainting his mind with loving kindness and compassion. As an ordinary person he had familiarised and acquainted himself with love again and again, and meditated on love and tried to generate and further develop it. It was a continuous effort over many lifetimes, sine the time he an ordinary person that seed of love was established and further developed. Eventually he reached the stage where he has boundless and limitless love in his mental continuum. What we need to derive and understand on a personal level is that if we train ourselves now we can also develop unconditional love and compassion in our mind. We all have a genuine concern for others within ourselves right now; so based on the love we have within ourselves now we can further develop and strengthen it. Over time the degree of love that we have now will also turn into an unconditional and boundless love similar to the Buddha. This is the essential point that we need to understand.

Another quote from the Buddha is: "If you harm any living being, you are harming me. If you benefit any living being, you are also benefiting me." So this is a really profound point that illustrates the Buddha's genuine concern for each and every living being. In ordinary terms the Buddha is proclaiming, "If you want to respect and love me, then love other sentient beings. That will be equal to loving me. And if you don't want to hurt and be disrespectful to me, then don't hurt and be disrespectful to other living beings." So these are profound points that we need to reflect upon.

The unbiased and indiscriminate love that the Buddha has for all loving beings, and the intensity of that love, is said to be like a mother's unconditional love for her only child. Here, we can use the analogy of the great concern and love that a mother would have for an only child. If anyone was nice and shows kindness to the child it will naturally make the mother very happy. Whereas, if someone were to hurt the child, she would also feel the pain and hurt. So this is an analogy that shows the extent of the Buddha's love and compassion towards each and every living being.

Now there are further benefits mentioned in the text, which we can leave for our next sessions. However, reflecting on the actual benefits of love or the value of unconditional love, we see that the value of unconditional love goes beyond even religion. First of all, within religion we can see that every religious tradition carries that same message. And has His Holiness the Dalai Lama has emphasised in his teachings, he has found from his own investigation that the core of every other genuine

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tradition—such as Christianity or Hinduism or Islam—is unconditional love. That is a value that is held in high esteem in every tradition. It is the very basis of every religious tradition. Even beyond religion, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, he has found that unconditional love is something that is cherished and valued by all creatures alike. It is something that really serves as the basis of our existence.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama related that when he was in Spain on one occasion, he met a Christian hermit monk. He was visiting an old monastery and heard about this monk who had been in retreat for over six years. When he actually met this monk he asked him, “So what were you meditating on during your six years retreat?” The monk’s spontaneous response was, “I was meditating on love.” The Dalai Lama was saying that when he responded to the question, his expression was very genuine and gentle, which indicated that his core practice was indeed love. The manner of conducting his retreat the Dalai Lama said, was living on very meagre conditions, very simple food, just dried bread and the like. And even his clothing very simple. His Holiness remarked that it was very inspiring to witness his simplicity and to know that he meditating on love.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, let us again spend just a few minutes in meditation. This time the object of the meditation can be the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni’s mantra. As we hear the sound of the mantra when it is being recited, we can try to keep our full attention and focus its sound. Then, as the recitation subsides and we hear the lack of its sound, we can imagine its vacuity as an empty space. Our focus on that space for a few moments, as if there is no object, but a gap, will suffice as our meditation.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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